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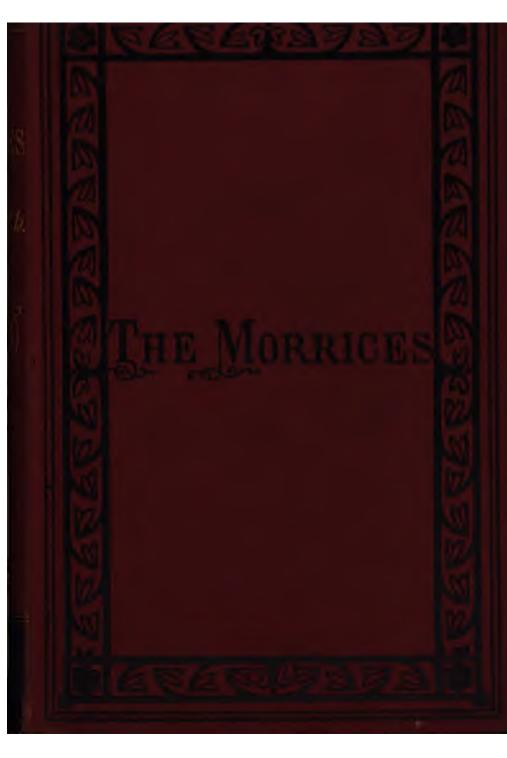
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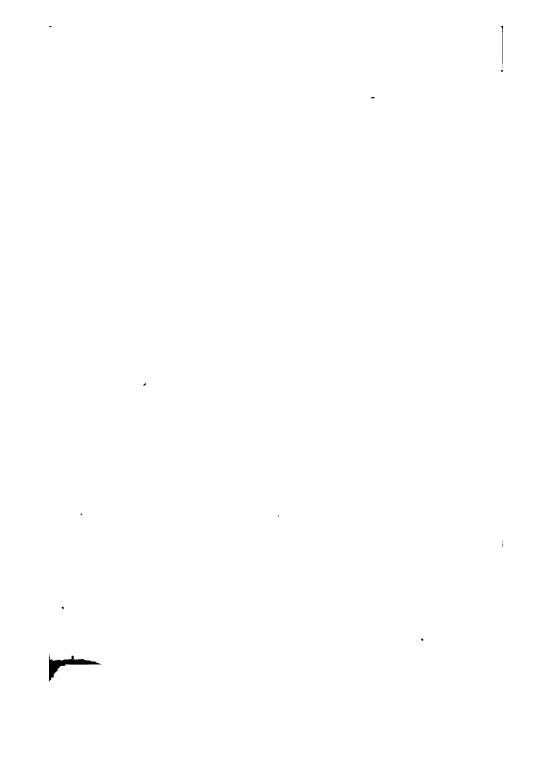
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THE MORRICES;

OR,

THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

VOL. III.



THE MORRICES;

OR.

THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

BY

G. T. LOWTH,

AUTHOR OF

"AROUND THE KREMLIN,"

&c. &c.

"Exception proves the rule."



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE MORRICES;

OR,

THE DOUBTFUL MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

THREE months had passed away. The winter was over. Many of the hunting-men had come up to London, though the steady, persevering sportsmen, never quite happy out of the saddle, were still down in the provinces. The clubs were full of men. Easter was not yet, but there were many families in town. Parliament was sitting. It was the end of March.

One day a number of men were in the morning-room of the Travellers' Club, readvol. III.

ing newspapers, or writing at the round table, or scattered in groups about the crimson sofas and arm-chairs in gossiping conversation.

- "Have you heard the news about Morrice?" said one of them, Henry Paulton, a young attaché at home on leave, approaching a group in a corner.
 - "Which Morrice?" asked another.
- "Why, Frank—him of this club," said Paulton.
- "What of him?" inquired George Mortimer, a middle-aged habitué.
- "Tis a comical story," said Paulton. "I only give it for what it is worth. They say he is going to marry a coal-merchant's daughter at Richmond."
- "No, no," said Captain Wynckly, joining the group—"it's no such thing. Morrice is bad about a girl at Richmond, who lives with an aunt there in a cottage. Aunt is a

widow of some man who made a little money in trade."

"Well," said Paulton, "that does not contradict my story as to the girl's birth and parentage. I won't bet on the marrying, but I was told he intends it—anyhow, he is very often at Richmond."

"He was here two days ago," said Mortimer, "and seemed to be in rare good spirits; talked of going down to have a few last days with the Pytchley in their wood country before the finish of the season."

"Very likely," said Paulton. "He never uttered a word about Richmond, I'll be bound. With all his open and cheery ways Frank is as close as a private sec. in Downing Street."

"I can't think there is much in the marrying part of the story," said Wynckly. "I was down, in the beginning of the winter, at Undersides' place, Woodbury, and Frank and his father were both there for the fortnight I stayed, and they seemed to be on
the best of terms, so the old man could
have known nothing of any marrying of
this girl at that time, anyhow. Besides,
my lady there—I hope I am not treading
on anybody's toes in saying so—but my lady
there had a quiet little game as to Frank.
I doubted her winning it; but she was playing it, of course without a suspicion of this."

"All that is no doubt true to the letter," said Mortimer; "and my father, who is an old chum of Frank's father, was at The Wick only last week, and he said Morrice père was as pleasant as ever—full of talk all about politics and philosophy, and all the rest of it; and he spoke of Frank in the highest terms. He, at all events, can't know anything about this girl, for he is a high old Conservative of the first water, my dad says."

"Don't you know," said Wynckly, "that Morrice père is a philosopher, besides being I heard him when we a Conservative? were down at Woodbury; and Lord Wyville, who was down there, told me a good deal about him. He may be a Conservative of the purest water, but then he's too clever by half to hold by the shell of anything merely because it is a beautiful shell. He goes in for the kernel too, and he says you can't do without the kernel as you can't do without the shell. What he means is, that there must be outside forms to preserve inside goodness-outside ranks and classes to maintain inside usefulness. He'll quote to you old Greeks, and Latins, and Britons too-Whately and Bacon, and I don't know who-to show that our humankind is but a poor weakly devil if left to itself without forms and ceremonies; and that those who want to do away with them are but

ignorant stupids, who would reduce us to a mere mob of men and women."

"Well, that's good Conservatism," said. Mortimer, "or the deuce is in it."

"Very true," continued Wynckly: "but then he comes in with this idea: forms and ceremonies are not everything—they are not the kernel-rank is not the man, only without ranks you have only half the man; as in an army, without the officers and a general-real officers and a real general commanding—you have no man at all—no army—only a mob—fit for nothing. says society is just like an army—an affair of laws, and arrangement, and art; and if you jumble all up together-general and officers and privates without marked distinctions, you have a mere jumble of atoms, not worth a rush; and if you jumble up all together in civil life-king and nobles and gentry and mechanics without marked distinctions, and try to make an equality, you have the same mess—a mere mob—not a society—a mob—where the worse men rule by violence, and the better men go to the wall."

"Well done, Morrice père," said Mortimer, "that is just what my father says of him. Then how the deuce could he swallow Frank's marrying this girl, which would upset all his theory of ranks and classes?"

"I shall not believe it till I see it," said Wynckly; "but if it is true, then I'll lay my life that he makes it out to his own satisfaction that there are exceptions to every general rule—the exception proves it, you know, as we learned at Eton—and that some other law comes in for the nonce and weighs."

"And perhaps the girl is consumedly pretty," said Paulton, "which would weigh with Frank, at all events, if not with père Morrice."

"I know she is extremely pretty," said another man, joining the party, Charles Wynne, a foreign-office man.

"Hullo! why, here's more authority," exclaimed Paulton. "What do you know of this pretty little story, Master Charley? You generally manage to pick up something about most matters."

"I hear there's a regular flare-up about it in some quarters, which shall be nameless," answered Charles Wynne. "A certain lady in Berkeley Square is like a lioness robbed of her whelps—considers Frank has done her a serious injury."

"Connu," said Wynckly, "we're all there. Little game at Woodbury I've been just expounding."

"Oh! ah!" exclaimed Wynne; "two entire days I have been on the tramp, neglecting my bread, all for my lady, two days following to Richmond—first day drew a blank. Three nights ago I dined in the Square, and happening to mention Frank I saw a dark cloud gather on the mountain brow, and heard low thunder. After dinner I broke ground again as to the cloud, up in the drawing-room, and then heard the Richmond story. The query was, was it all true, or was it not? 'Oho!' says I, 'that's the covert where the game lies; so in the morning I go to Richmond—just to eat some luncheon, you know, at the 'Garter.' That day drew blank, as I said. Go again the next. When, lo! on the terrace, as I ride along, who but Frank, walking with two ladies. I stop and have a word, and see that one is a declining female, and the other quite young, and extremely pretty, and well dressed—A 1, in fact. Well, I eat my pennyworth at the 'Garter,' and hear a story, and get back, and yesterday I call at the Square. Oh, Lord! if Frank wants mercy in his last moments let him avoid the Square! Luckily there are many mansions in a certain place, as well as in London, or there would be falling out, in spite of St. Peter!"

"Charley, don't be profane," said Paulton.

"Ah! but that is not half the affair," continued Wynne. "Who should be at the 'Garter,' as head-waiter, but an old servant of my father; and while I discussed my cutlet he gave me a story which made me almost forget, while I was listening, that the sherry really was praiseworthy. He said he got it out of a man who had it from an old groom of Frank's at The Wick. I know him—a queer fellow called Dick, who comes up with Frank's horses now and then. waiter's story is this-that Frank, one night, was in bed at The Wick—last autumn—so hot he couldn't sleep; he gets up and opens his window, which gives, as the French say, towards the river, two or three hundred

yards off. Standing there, he hears a dog cry, as if in the water, go on crying—a young dog—going down stream—middle of the night, mind you, a dog drowning. Down goes Frank, as he is—nothing but his shirt on him—lets himself out—over the grass—jumps the iron rails, and into the river; paddles out and gets hold of the animal, and brings it to shore—a brindled pup—and takes it home."

- "No ladies in the house," said Paulton; "looking out—at the moon, you know."
- "Now, don't interrupt him, please," said Mortimer. "First-rate story of Wynne. Go on—carries the pup home in his nightshirt; well?"
- "The next morning," continued Wynne,
 "Frank hears there is a barge at anchor off
 the place; so he takes the pup in his boat,
 to ask if they lost one overboard; and he
 sees who?—this girl; pup belongs to her—

deuced pretty—grateful, and all that—so begins the business."

"Never heard such a lark!" exclaimed Paulton; "but I shouldn't be jealous about getting out of bed in the middle of the night, and going the pace over the grass for a quarter of a mile—bare tootens—and then a plunge into the river and a swim—no kind of entertainment."

"Ah! but Frank Morrice lives in the water about half his time," said Mortimer; "he's about half a water-dog by nature, and the other half by habit—boating and bathing most mornings, he tells me, and sculls into London very often, with a swim for a mile or two of the way. He would just as soon bathe at midnight as midday."

"Well, of course that pup is a beautiful bond of union," said Paulton, "and the girl so deuced pretty."

"Now, don't sneer, Paulton," said Mor-

timer; "it doesn't become you. You're good-looking when you're right-minded; but when you're not, the crossing-sweeper with the red waistcoat at the Lansdowne corner of Berkeley Square with a blear eye would beat you for looks before any jury of men severely selected—half sweepers, half Travellers' men,—so now don't."

- "Please to tell us, Wynne," said Wynckly, "did you communicate this remarkable story to my lady in the Square?"
- "Of course I did," said Wynne. "You wouldn't have had me leave out the run over the turf against time in his racing-jacket."
 - "Did she laugh?" said Mortimer.
- "Yes, she did; but she declared she didn't believe it."
- "All right," said Mortimer; "then she won't kill Frank this time, though her little game is spoiled. Of course she would have

preferred that Frank should have taken his gallop over the Ladies' Mile to the river in his racing trim under somebody's colours rather than those of the young woman of the barge."

"By the way," said Wynne, "that brings me back to the rest of the story—it's not half done yet. Do any of you men remember that murder down there by Kew, and a Coroner's inquest, somewhere in last winter? I was down near Leicester, where my Uncle Wyville always mounts me for a month—hunting at the time; but I recollect reading all about it in the *Times*."

"Of course—inquest at Kew," said Paulton—" man killed by a creek and some osiers; read it all in *Galignani*—never found out who did it—young man off a barge suspected, and levanted."

"That's it," said Wynne. "There's a tale hangs by all that. Frank Morrice was in it."

"Frank Morrice in it!" said Mortimer.

"Oh! come, now, you're going it pretty
fast over the country, as they do down at
Leicester, Master Charles."

"I don't mean, of course, that Frank had anything to do with killing the poor devil," "What I mean is this: the said Wynne. young fellow off the barge, so the story goes, had a sneaking liking for this girl on Frank's barge—I mean the girl who lost the pup that Frank saved in the middle of the night, after the run over the open, when he took to water so kindly. Well, this young fellow had a grievance against Frank because of this girl—the young fellow was on board this very barge, mind you. there is a very queer story indeed afloat in those parts, so the old waiter told me, that the poor devil who was killed was like Frank—so like that people mistook one for the other sometimes about there in the

dusk; and it is suspected that the sailorchap came across him by the creek, where both were known to be about the same time, and mistook him for Frank, and so the blow was intended for him."

"By Gad! what a bore to be like anybody else!" said Paulton; "but, 'pon my life, that part of the world down by Kew seems to be quite a cheerful country—a good deal going on."

"You may say that," continued Wynne. "That young chap of the barge, so they say, had another grievance against Frank. The old waiter told me that in the autumn sometimes a very pretty bit of sporting goes on in The Wick park. Morrice père has got a lot of fine walnut and chestnut-trees—Spanish chestnuts, you know—in the park—no end of fine ones—and he sends the fruit up here to Covent Garden Market quite after the manner, do you see, of a merchant prince, and

that sort of thing—has a place of his own in the market, like the Duke of Middlesex, who lives close by. Well, in the autumn, when these noble fruits become ripe, worthies come off the river who don't pay for the noble fruits—that is, not freely and in the fair and legitimate way of commerce. They step over the wall into The Wick and capture a dessert for themselves, after a promiscuous dinner on board the barges, without going to Covent Garden-go to the merchant prince direct, you may say. Frank, as the merchant prince junior in the firm, objects to this, takes his gun, and comes round on these people capturing their dessert at large, and gives them incontinently No. 5. There is a suspicion abroad, as I said, in those regions that the young chap of the barge not only had a sore against Frank Morrice on account of the girl, but also a sore on his back from No. 5, while he was decamping with his dessert captured against the laws of the Medes and Persians and also without acknowledging the principles of commerce supported by the merchant prince in Covent Garden."

"My dear Wynne," exclaimed Paulton, "do pray do me a kindness—take me some day to see this delightful part of the country. I live so much abroad, I really am shamefully ignorant of the picturesque spots round Kew, and their genial customs of life. You positively are the luckiest fellow to have fallen in with all this from merely dining in the square and having a quiet talk with a lady in a corner. then to see the girl who is the cause of all this shindy, and to hear such a splendid story at first-hand! How do you manage always to fall on your legs in the matter of entertainment?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Wynne,

modestly; "I don't do half as much as anybody else. People have a way of telling me things—I can't help it."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Wynckly, "that accounts for why the whole thing blew quietly over after the inquest. The young chap of the barge, who was suspected of the murder, was declared to have disappeared. nobody knew where. And now I remember there was a curious kind of mystery about it, which nobody could make anything of-that the young bargeman had never known or even seen the young fellow that was killed; and the parents of the murdered man declared at the inquest they were perfectly certain their son never knew the bargeman; and so there was no explanation of the reason of the murder, or of the cause of the young bargeman's disappearance. I remember there was a good deal of question over it in the papers at the time, and everybody was at a nonplus. But now, reading it by this new light of Wynne's story, the thing looks clearer. The young bargeman killed the young man, and he slipped off because he had killed a man, though he had killed the wrong man—a man he did not know, and did not intend to kill."

"Can you tell me this, Wynckly—did Frank Morrice have anything to do with the young bargeman's disappearance?" said Paulton, "as Wynne said Frank was in it all."

"I would rather anybody asked him that question," said Wynckly, "than myself. Try him yourself, Paulton."

"I'll tell you what I should like," said Mortimer—"I should like some man to bet me five to two against Frank marrying that girl. After this story of Wynne, and after a man has got in so deep as murder and that sort of thing about an affair, he can't back out."

"One thing you may depend on," said Wynckly, "if he really likes the girl, I know enough of him to know he is hard to turn from what he has a mind to. When Frank Morrice is on Quince it must be a very queer fence indeed to turn him. He takes a line of his own, and sticks to it."

"Like father, like son," said Mortimer; "there's good blood—I'm open to five to two. If the girl is worth anything—mind that; if she's a fool, then I don't know where we are in the race—but if she's good for anything, and honest in her running, then I'll back Frank to pull her through and marry her."

"If he does," said Paulton, "let us make a party, and go and see it. Wynne will be sure to find out when it is to be—he finds out everything. I have a notion that in a former condition of things, according to Darwin and the Vestiges, Wynne's ancestor was a harrier, or foxhound, or bloodhound, of the true old sort—scent anything, and hunt up to it, ages off. By-the-way, I wonder if Darwin considers those the good old times we hear so much of now and then?"

"I should like to see the girl immensely," said Wynckly. "I think I shall drive down and have a cutlet at the 'Garter' to-morrow. I don't see why Wynne should have all the stories of the old waiter to himself. I daresay he has some more."

"Please take me," said Paulton. So it was agreed that they should go to Richmond on the morrow, to have a walk on the terrace; and Wynne was to go with them, to point out Mrs. Print and Susan Harding, in case they should meet them.

CHAPTER II.

N the day succeeding that whereon the conversation, recorded in the last chapter, took place at "The Travellers' Club," Frank Morrice was in London. He had put off for a few days his going down into the country to have a last gallop or two of the season with the Pytchley, and for this reason. His father had again, after a long silence, expressed a wish to see Susan; and Frank had proposed a plan for his gratifying this wish, without being known to her. Mr. Morrice had objected to this at first, but was overruled by Frank. He thought she might be frightened at such a meeting, and not appear to advantage. So the plan

was this. Frank was to arrange to take a walk in Kew Gardens with Susan and her aunt, and Mr. Morrice was to go up there from The Wick and meet them as a stranger. This was to take place within the next few days. So Frank postponed his visit to the Pytchley, and went to Richmond. Having arranged what he so much wished, and delighted Mrs. Print, and also Susan, by his proposal, he went to London on some business for his father on the day preceding that appointed for the walk.

Frank's business for his father took him into the city. He had been to the family lawyer in Lincoln's Inn, and was walking down Fleet Street, on his way to the Bank, when a tall young fellow met him and pushed by him rather rudely. Frank was not a man to think of such a thing in a crowded thoroughfare like Fleet Street, and went on; but the other turned round and looked after

him. He appeared to consider that Frank had run against him, for he swore a low muttered oath. He was on the point of going on again, when something in Frank's appearance seemed to strike him suddenly. "Damme—why, 'tis him!" he said, half aloud. Then, after staring for a moment, he followed Frank.

This young fellow was a tall, broadshouldered, dark-haired man, dressed partly as a sailor, and partly as a landsman; but he walked with a lurching, swinging step, such as is common to men of the sea. His dress was worn, but sound, consisting of a long round blue jacket, a slouched black hat, and full black trousers, with laced boots. His hair was long and thick, and a beard grew all over his face. What was visible was burnt and bronzed. Earrings were in his ears, and he looked more like a foreigner than an Englishman. A few months of

ship-life on the African coast—for the ship on board which he had started from the river for Australia had been lost at sea, and he and others had been saved in boats, and had been carried by a passing ship to the African coast, and landed there—had changed Tom Plank from the young-looking, smooth-faced man of "the Columbine," to the burnt, and bronzed, and bearded sailor. He had come home in a French ship, and had adopted earrings, because the French sailors wore them; and he had landed in London from a French barque from Dunkirk, only the day before.

Not knowing what to do with himself, Tom had been sauntering about, doubting what course he should adopt. He had come back from the Guinea Coast because he found it too horrible to live there. Should he now go on board some other ship bound for Australia, or Canada, or where? He

was afraid to stay long in England, for fear of being discovered. His extraordinary change of appearance would disguise him for a time; but when the little money he had left of what he had earned at Sierra Leone was gone—he had worked his passage home in the French ship—what could he do then without risk of discovery?

Now that he was in England again, the one idea in his mind was—Susan. He would like to see Susan again, and then he would decide. The young fellow had really loved Susan, and his jealous passion had worked ill for him. So he was loitering about the city, hesitating whether he should go to Southwark, when suddenly he met, of all men—Frank. In a moment all the old savage anger rushed over him. The blood tingled through all his veins, and the sensation of "stinging" in his back seemed to burn in him and set on fire all the evil

passions of his nature. So he followed Frank. He had no definite notion in his mind in following him, but he had nothing to occupy him, nothing to do elsewhere of any immediate purpose; and so this figure of Frank, of his enemy, gave his vague mind an object, besides that it was in itself an attraction to him—a strong, almost an irresistible, attraction. So much was it connected with, and an important part of, his former life, that he had scarcely the power to do anything but follow it. So he followed it.

Frank went on to St. Paul's, and so down Cheapside, little imagining who was dogging him at some forty or fifty paces distance, keeping an eye on him—from time to time losing sight of him in the press of people, then walking quick till he caught sight of him again—then lingering once more, looking into a shop window for a moment,

and then on again, till he again would see the ever-retreating figure. So he watched Frank into the Bank. Here he began little pretended bargains with the Jew boys and others standing about with their wares on the platform of the Exchange and in the street, but always keeping an eye on the entrance to the building where Frank had gone in. last Frank came out, and went on towards London Bridge; but turning down by the Monument, he went into Thames Street, passing Billingsgate Market. Frank was in search of a shipping agent who had written to The Wick that he had a case of china and glass from Frankfort for Mr. Morrice. He had passed the house, and was on his back back to it, when he came suddenly plump upon Tom, who had stopped to look at some But Tom was in reality almost unknown to Frank, though Frank was known to Tom.

Frank had never seen his face but once, on that occasion of his visit to Wilcox's Wharf, soon after his swim in the river to save Susan's pup, except one day by Chiswick Eyot. Even then he had seen it only for a short time, and at a distance. When he had come to the barge at Southwark, Tom was not present; so now this big, lurching, dark-bearded, sailor-looking man was as a total stranger to Frank. He only now stepped quickly half-aside and passed, scarcely remarking the man.

Frank, having completed his business in the City, now bent his way leisurely back to the West End. Tom measured his pace as before, keeping Frank in view. The one walked on at his ease, utterly unsuspicious of any danger near him, and without a care in the world, happy and contented, at peace with himself and with everyone.

The other slouched along, nourishing his

heart with anger, half forming plans of vengeance, his mind at war with itself, and hating all the world in a lump. No—he did not hate Susan. But whenever her figure presented itself prominently to his thoughts—and it was in fact, as it were, always in the background of them—then it did but add to and aggravate the wrath that was irritating his whole being.

Reaching the foot of Wellington Street, Frank turned up to the right, and so went into Covent Garden. The Market was his object. He had a few words to deliver to the salesman for The Wick fruit, which went up, at all seasons, every week to the Market. Having disposed of this little matter, he sauntered into the central avenue of the place, and here he lingered; first at one shop or stall, then at another; now at one where foreign dried fruits were temptingly arranged in small baskets, now at one where

the coming summer garden produce of England was forestalled by the forced productions of heated houses. These latter he gave but a slight attention to—they were the same as The Wick houses sent to his father's table; but over the former he prolonged his examination, also his questions to the sellers. The fact was that Susan was in his mind as he returned from the City, and he had turned up into Covent Garden to see if there was anything new he could take home for her for the morrow, when he should see her on the occasion of the projected walk in Kew Gardens. Now he ended his inquiry by ordering some curious foreign fruits to be sent at once to The Travellers' Club.

So the two young men reached Pall Mall. Here Frank walked leisurely up the steps of the Club, and entered it. As they had emerged from the crowded and smaller streets by St. Martin's Lane into the opener

and freer ground of Trafalgar Square, Tom had for a moment hesitated to advance. He was one of the common mass in the Strand or Covent Garden; he felt he would be more conspicuous in the open and less-frequented Square. But a rapid reflection told him he was not more known in one part of this side of London than in another—that his disguise was as good in Pall Mall as in Fleet Street. Besides, his nourished passions now raged within him, and urged him on to dare almost anything—even discovery. So he advanced.

When Frank entered the Club doors, Tom loitered past them, and up Pall Mall. He had never been here before in his life. At any other time, with his mind more free and at ease, he might have given some attention to the noble street, its fine buildings, and the general air of superiority to the more common thoroughfares of the east.

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But now he saw nothing but his passions within him. His one external object was Frank's figure. He went up the street towards St. James's, crossed over, and returned down the other side, walking deliberately, his large-brimmed hat a little pulled down over his eyes. As he passed . along opposite to the Club he saw Frank standing in one of the windows, talking, as it seemed, at his ease and pleasantly with one or two other gentlemen. Tom cursed him in his heart. Presently a phaeton, with a pair of neat, well-bred horses, was driven up by a groom to the Club steps, and Frank was seen to take leave of his com-In a moment he appeared on the panions. steps. Tom crossed over, and sauntered up, and leaned against the balustrade a little way off, as if to look at the horses at his There was a fierce pleasure to him leisure. in being within reach almost of his enemy.

"Off home, Morrice?" said a cheery voice, as Mortimer mounted the steps. "How long does it take your nags to do it?"

"I always give them an hour from door to door," replied Frank, "barring stoppages—take them in cool."

"Don't turn a hair, I'll be bound, to look at them," said Mortimer.

Just then a boy ran up with a basket of the fruits from Covent Garden, which Frank placed carefully on the seat, and then got up.

"There goes as good a fellow as ever lived, and a great deal too good for the Richmond affair," said Mortimer to another man, Paulton, who just then came out of the club door. A hansom cab drove up, and Paulton got in. As he was going off Mortimer called to him. "Paulton, wait a moment." And then, in a lower voice,

- "How about Richmond this morning? Did you see her?"
- "A dead mull," replied Paulton. "We went down—Wynckly and Wynne and I—we had our luncheon at the 'Garter;' never saw a blessed soul—no old waiter—ill or something—Morrice up here, you see, —no girl—no nothing—an entire sell—paid in low spirits for our cutlets, and came home as we went."
- "Côtelettes, sauce Richmond," said Mortimer, laughing.
 - "Bother!" said Paulton, sulkily.

Tom had continued leaning against the balustrade after Frank had driven off, so he heard this conversation. Now he sauntered away eastwards, muttering to himself—"He's down at The Wick, then, as ever. Maybe I'll look him up some day, blast him! I could ha' cut his liver out as we come along now; and he up in that house

a-talking and a-larfing, jest at home, and me out here a-doing nothing; but—but I'll be even with him—see if I don't!" So he went on eating his heart, and plodding his way along the Strand.

The day was getting towards evening as Tom reached Southwark Bridge. He walked down the stairs to where some boats were lying. A barge lay a little way off, and a man belonging to her was sitting in the barge's boat at the stairs. Tom entered into conversation with him, and sat down in the bows of the boat. By degrees Tom interested the man—a middle-aged sea-faring man-by talking about the sea. The man had been much at sea in his younger days, and liked a talk on the subject. Tom mentioned Africa, and the man knew the coast. So they told each other a story or two. Presently a boy came down the stairs and got into the boat, and they were

shoving off for the barge. Tom said he had nothing to do, and would go with them, if the man didn't object; and, as he wanted to hear some more stories about the sea, he made no objection, and Tom got in. Once in the boat, Tom proposed, as the man sculled out towards the barge, which was a river collier, that he should just go over to Wilcox's wharf on the opposite shore, as he wanted to inquire about a barge called the 'Columbine' that belonged there. The man con-As they went, Tom told him a cocksented. and-bull story of a quarrel between himself and his uncle, who was the master of the 'Columbine,' to account for his present inquiries. His uncle and he had parted, and he wanted to know about him. Now Tom sat in the stern with his hat well over his eyes, feeling pretty sure that even Harding would not know him. If the barge was there he would wait somewhere till dark-perhaps with the collier-and then try to speak to Susan.

There were vessels lying off the wharf, as usual, but there was no "Columbine." He asked the man to push the boat up between some of the craft, so as to get near enough to see if the "Columbine" was up inside the gates, and in the canal under the warehouse. No, she was not there; the gates were open, and the canal empty. As he sat there examining the canal, Mr. Charles came out on the wharf. Seeing the boat plying about there among his vessels, he asked if Tom wanted anyone there. Tom answered rather gruffly, and in a feigned voice, that he was looking for the "Columbine." Mr. Charles did not recognise the voice or the bearded man, and answered that "Harding was up the river with the 'Columbine.'" Tom touched his hat mechanically, thanked him, and told the man to go back. He had obtained all he wanted

to know—that Harding was still with the barge, and therefore Susan. He went with the man to the collier, stopped a little time, and then went ashore.

Tom soon found a public-house where he could stay for the night, and being hungry after his long walk in pursuit of Frank and again into the City, he had some supper and went to bed. But while lying there and thinking of Susan, and then of the walk after Frank, it suddenly struck him that the gentleman getting into the hansom cab at the club door had said something of a girl at Richmond some one had gone to see. It had not at all seemed to him, on his first hearing this, that it meant any girl in particular; but now in a moment it flashed across him that Frank Morrice's name had been mentioned in connexion with Richmond and the girl. The "Columbine" was up the river, too-perhaps at Richmond. Perhaps the girl was Susan. The idea once in his head, Tom could not rid himself of it—his jealous passion fed it; and so, by degrees, he came to imagine one reason after another why the barge might be there. therefore Susan there, therefore Frank there. Tom now fairly worked himself into a conviction that Susan was the girl alluded to at the club door. This thought maddened Every kind of wild supposition rose up in his heated and irregular mind. last his tired imagination rested, and allowed him to sleep a little; but his sleep was restless, and his dreams were of violent actions and sudden changes of scene; and in all of them there was Susan or Frank. times she was smiling, and he tried to take her hand, and she snatched it away from him; and Frank rode by on a horse, and laughed. Then he got hold of Frank, and tried to throttle him, when the face turned

to him, and it was Harding's. So Tom passed a disturbed night.

On that evening, as Frank drove down home to The Wick, it occurred to him, more than once, that he had seen that afternoon in the City that same large black-bearded man with a slouch hat, who was loitering about the steps of the club as he came out.

CHAPTER III.

In the morning Tom got up from his bed feverish and out of humour with all the world. Thinking over the events of the previous day he resolved he would go to Richmond at once, and satisfy himself as to Susan being there. The "Columbine" was up the river—she might be at Richmond. He would go and see if the barge was there. He might at any rate hear something or see something of her. Besides, he had now nothing to keep him in London.

So Tom started for Richmond. It was a ten-miles' walk, or rather more from the City; but he preferred this to the steamers on the river or a coach, and he saved his money. He knew all the borders of the river, so he went by Westminster and Chelsea to Hammersmith. When at this place, he determined he would go by Chiswick and The Wick. So he kept along the riverside through Chiswick. He had hardly cleared this, when the tops of the tall elms and walnut and chestnut-trees of The Wick rose up in his front in the distance.

On reaching the boundary wall of the park he stopped and looked down a by-roadway under it. A remembrance seemed to strike him as he turned away with an oath, and kept forward on the road. Perhaps the memory of a certain high mound in the corner of the park, with fir-trees on it, and walnut-trees just inside the wall, rose up in his mind and angered him.

As he approached the gates of The Wick, he involuntarily gave his broad-brimmed

hat an extra pull over his eyes. The back gates were shut, and no one was about. He stopped and listened, and could hear the stablemen calling to their horses in the stables and the yard as they dressed them. It was still quite early in the day, for Tom had started soon after daylight. He went on to the front gates, and looked through the crevices of the wooden shutters, which folded over the old-fashioned Dutch iron gates of open work, of twisted bars and spreading foliage. There stood the white house at a little distance in the quiet morning air, with its tall Italian columns and pilasters on its northern front sleeping in the shadow. He went on down the wall, under the great branches of the elms which stretched out over the brickwork; and so he came down on the river. The tide was half up, so he could creep between the ponderous bars of Barker's rails on to the

rough path—the disputed path—which led along under the arbeles. Once inside the rails, he had all the place in sight.

There seemed to be some fascination to Tom in The Wick. He sat down to rest himself after his long walk on a projecting foot of the brickwork of the boundary wall.

There was the house standing back from the river on its lawn, with its cedars and ilex, its American oak and beech, in rich masses near it. Close by him, and just inside the iron rail that ran along by the path under the arbeles, was the Italian pavilion of white stone. How well he knew it, and how often he had listened to Susan as she had guessed what was its purpose, as he had passed with the "Columbine" up and down the stream! How long ago this all seemed now, and how different! The picture of the barge and those careless, easy days

floated before him, when all now appeared to him to have been so happy and so smooth—Harding smoking, and Sammy whistling, and himself talking to Susan, and thinking that he liked to look at her, and perhaps she did not dislike his looking at her, as they all went leisurely up on the top of the tide. Now how different it was! There was the river sweeping up, and there were various craft upon its bosom, and there was the White Pavilion; but himself—how changed! Now he was sitting there in disguise, miserable, angry with everyone, alone in the world, hating and, in the deep of his heart, fearing. Then he thought over the day when he was last on that water, the day when he had sculled up from the osiers just below, round those very rails to Sangster's, and had taken the old man down there to the barge, and so back again. And then-and then-he growled out some curse, and gave a twitch at his hat.

Nobody was stirring about the house, as far as he could see. Some of the lower windows were open, letting in the fresh morning air from the river into the awakening house. The western face was in shade and repose, while the ground beyond was all bathed in the morning sun. How peaceful and quiet and graceful it all looked! But Tom saw none of its beauty, whether of art or nature—he saw only his own wretched life, and the figures that formed the scenes of it.

After a time the rising tide warned him that he must get back through the rails, or consent to be imprisoned by the water, or wade through it to escape. So he went back again to the road. He soon passed the door of Sangster, the old boat-builder, but he did not turn into it. He heard the old

man's hammer sounding from the shed, sending forth upon the water its echoing signal of useful industry; but Tom had not much cared for industry at any time, and now his thoughts were far away from any such common way of life. He passed along the Strand, and remembered the dusky evening of the day when he met, as he thought, young Frank Morrice, and saw men touch their hats to him.

So he walked forward, and over Kew Bridge, and along the long wall of the Fleet by Kew Gardens, towards Richmond. As he reached the far end of the wall, and was striking out on to the opener ground beyond, he saw a door in the wall thrown open, and so left. Stopping to look in, he saw shading fir-trees, and grass, and flowers, and the guardian of the door retreating into his lodge. Tom hesitated about entering, ignorant if he might do so; but presently

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one or two persons from the direction of Richmond came up- and went in, quite as a matter of course; so Tom followed them. Once inside, he found himself in the large and beautiful grounds of Kew Gardens. He wandered on, staring about him. He had never been there before, though he had so often passed on the river up and down so near them. At last he came to a seat in a shady place, and throwing himself on to it, he soon gave way to the influence of the quiet of the place, and the soft fresh air, and the song of birds; and so, fatigued by his long walk from London, he went to sleep.

It was on this day that it had been arranged that Frank should take Mrs. Print and Susan to walk in Kew Gardens; and that Mr. Morrice should meet them there from The Wick, and see Susan, himself unknown to her.

The time agreed on was twelve o'clock. So Frank set off for Richmond, and cantered gaily along by the wall of the Fleet. On arriving at the cottage, he found Mrs. Print and Susan ready. The former had got herself up for a visit to the far-famed gardens of Kew, with much satisfaction to herself, and with considerable study of appearance. In a brown silk dress and a bonnet of dahlia-coloured velvet, with flowers of the same hue, she flattered herself, as she looked in her glass, that she was, as she termed it to Susan, "rather killing, my dear!" A short silk cloak, of the same colour as her dress, completed her costume. She insisted on Susan wearing the blue dress she had bought for her on her first coming It had only been worn to Richmond. hitherto on Sundays. In a grey bonnet with blue flowers, and a loose grey jacket, Susan was charming—at least, Frank thought

so, and he told her so in a whisper, at which Susan blushed with happiness.

It may be said here that Susan had never left Richmond from the day of her first coming to her aunt. When Harding had come down the river at the end of the fortnight, as we remember, and had seen his sister in her cottage, and his daughter with her, and had had that conversation with Mrs. Print about Frank, and had subsequently learned from her what he had said of his father's consent to his coming to the cottage, the worthy man had been induced to allow Susan to remain with her aunt. He had felt that, in fact, this, in many respects, was a more suitable place for her than the barge. He felt that it was an advantage to her to be with his sister in what was a condition of life in a degree superior to his own, and that his sister was as a mother to his child. at times been a little uneasy about the question of Frank. But matters had gone on from week to week, Harding not quite satisfied in his mind, but happy in seeing his daughter happy; and Mrs. Print overpowering him, as before, whenever there was any doubt or remonstrance on the part of her brother.

Now, on the occasion of this walk to Kew, Susan had been domiciled with her aunt for three months. Frank had, of course, been to the cottage frequently; and he had walked, and talked, and read with Susan, till the young girl had found herself in a new world of idea, and able to take her part fairly enough in a discussion with her aunt on the "Lady of the Lake," and the "Merchant of Venice," and many other productions of Print's favourite authors in prose and verse. Moreover, Susan had evinced a considerable natural talent for drawing, and this had been fostered under Frank's recommenda-

tion to Mrs. Print. So in these three months Susan had made advances in knowledge and cultivation—not very great ones, but still advances.

Now they all three set off in high spirits for Kew. Turning in at the gate of the gardens nearest to the town of Richmond, they found themselves at once within the shadow of the tall fir-trees and great elms, their huge limbs stretching out over the grass and along the gravel pathways. Frank led his companions by a path that went through the shrubberies to the open ground. The moment they cleared these and came in sight of the long sweep of turf to the large conservatories, Mrs. Print stopped in an ecstasy of pleasure.

"Oh! my goodness gracious! how beautiful! Oh! Susan, isn't it lovely? What trees! And then the fresh green all over the grass!—and the sun shining on those

glorious glass-houses! Oh! I am so glad we came! Ain't you, Susan?"

"Yes, aunt, that I am. I think this prettier here than the park."

"Of course it is—the park isn't half as pretty as this," said Mrs. Print, with her usual energy; "not half, except in some places."

"This is a garden as well as a park," said Frank; "and that makes a difference."

"Look, there are some flower-beds, too, aunt," said Susan, pointing with her parasol to some riband borders of crocuses and snowdrops, and other early flowers; "there are none of those in the park."

These flowers filled a long narrow border by some shrubs, and in a little recess of these there was a seat. On this was extended the large figure of a man, apparently young; but the upper part of his face was hidden in a broad-brimmed hat, and the lower part was covered with a thick dark beard. His dress was that of a sailor. He lay still, as if asleep. The three walked past, and the figure did not move. They all looked round at him as they went by.

"Had a long walk, by the look of his boots," observed Frank, in a low voice.

"Tired out and gone to sleep," said Mrs. Print.

So they went on, all enjoying their walk, and one or other making remarks on the scenery before them—the long wide sweep of grass extending far and wide; the belt of towering elms by the roadway they had left; the small clumps of shrubs of mingled evergreens scattered about over the sward; the brilliant conservatories standing out, and sparkling in the sunshine, and away from the shading trees; and the graceful buildings in the distance on the edge of the large basin of water. Mrs. Print was in ecstasies;

Susan thoroughly happy. Mrs. Print ran off to pick some wild flowers in the grass, and Frank and Susan strolled on. Frank looked down into her eyes.

- "Do you enjoy this?"
- "Oh! yes, so much," said Susan, smiling.

"I thought you would," said Frank; and then, in a lower tone, "my father wants to see you."

Susan stopped, and looked up seriously into Frank's face with her pretty, confiding eyes, without answering.

- "I have talked to him about you very often. Should you like to see him?"
- "Yes,"—it was almost in a whisper; and then presently, "do you wish it?"
- "Of course. I am sure he will like you," said Frank, in a low voice.
- "Is he like you?" Susan walked on again.

"Not a bit in the world—why, he's past fifty."

"I did not mean that," said Susan, smiling.
"Is he tall?"

Frank hesitated a moment. "Tall?— He's a little grey man."

Mrs. Print joined them again, with her captured flowers in her hand. Presently · they arrived at the large conservatory and went in. Here they remained for some time, Frank explaining to them some of the fine plants, palms and oleanders, giant ferns, and broad-leaved water-lilies floating in their sleeping basins. While they were standing by one of these basins, and admiring the noble flowers of the Victoria water-lily, they observed a gentleman standing on the opposite side, also looking quietly into the basin. He was a tall man, his figure spare, his face pale, his hair just beginning to turn grey, and apparently about fifty years of

age. There was a quiet dignity of expression in the face and figure. He appeared to be wrapped up in contemplating the noble lily, and he stooped down towards it, as if to examine the flower or the stems of the leaves more closely, as they lay on the water and. beneath it near the basin's edge. Mrs. Print and Susan seeing him do this were attracted by the act, moved by the little usual curiosity, the desire to know why any one does anything that is different from what others do: and this made them watch him. Frank stood a little behind them, and watched him As if speaking to someone he knew, and oblivious of anyone else being near him, the gentleman said aloud, "Can you tell me if those stems would yield a grey dye, or a black one?"

Mrs. Print was standing the nearest to him of the party, and thinking that he perhaps addressed her, said, "I'm sure I don't know, sir."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," he said, rising from his stooping posture, and bowing with old-fashioned politeness, "the gardener has gone away. I was asking him about these plants and their properties." Then he said, as if half to himself, and half to Mrs. Print, "It is a noble plant—and very beautiful—and rich."

"Oh, it is indeed," said Mrs. Print, now thinking with more reason that he addressed her. There was something so highly-bred in the appearance of the gentleman, and the words were spoken in such a simple way, that Mrs. Print took no alarm at the fact of his addressing her, though a total stranger. Again he stooped down and spoke.

"These plants vary very much; it is odd that the stem of a plant producing a white flower should produce a black dye."

- "That is extraordinary," said Mrs. Print.
- "But, after all, it is not more curious than that the root of the common yellow flag of our marshes should yield a black dye. Nature is arbitrary in her ways and has singular contrarieties, quite beyond our powers. We can only be thankful for their uses."
- "That we should indeed," said Mrs.
- "You ladies should be grateful," he went on, "for nature gives you all the brightcolours for your dress, some out of one root and some out of another."
- "I'm sure we are very grateful," said Mrs. Print, "and I don't know what we should do without the dyers, for when we have almost done with a dress, a silk or a stuff, and we can't wear it any more because it's got shabby, we have it dyed, and it comes out as good as new."

"Of course," said the gentleman, as a quiet smile passed over his lips; "that's what sensible people do."

"Now, here's Susan, my niece, sir,"—the little woman, in her ardour and her abandon of thought, quite forgot that this was a total stranger, and that he did not know her name, or she his,—"Susan Harding," and she made a waive of her hand towards Susan. "Well, she has never worn that blue dress more than a few times, at church, you know, and I tell her that it will last her for years if she is careful of it; and then as it's a good silk—there's no use in buying a bad one—it will dye, and be as good as ever."

During this speech the gentleman, after a kind bow to Susan, stooped a little towards the lily again, perhaps to hide a smile. Frank, standing behind the ladies, was laughing broadly but silently. Susan turned half round with a blushing cheek towards Frank, while she was thus singled out for observation, and caught sight of his face. This set her off too; and the two, unable to control themselves, laughed right out aloud.

- "Why, what are you laughing at, you two?" exclaimed Mrs. Print, turning round. "Isn't it true what I say?"
- "Yes, dear aunt," said Susan, recovering herself with an effort, "it is quite true; and I like the dress so very much—it's beautiful!"
- "Then what are you laughing at, like a gaby?" said Mrs. Print, pettishly.
- "It was I that made her laugh," said Frank. "Something came into my head that tickled me, and I couldn't help it; and Miss Susan saw me."

Mrs. Print instinctively felt that this was an excuse, and suspected that she had said something odd, but could not make out what. When the little party had recovered

themselves, and turned again towards the basin and the lily, they saw the gentleman slowly walking away, looking up at the tall palms and the giant ferns as he went.

"Well," said Mrs. Print, "now, I wonder who that gentleman was! How he seemed to know everything about those plants and things; and he was so completely the gentleman—wasn't he, Susan?"

"Yes, that he was. I wish he had not gone away so soon," said Susan.

"Suppose we go round this way—down by these palms, and go round?" said Mrs. Print eagerly. "I daresay we should meet him again."

"No, aunt, I don't think we should do that; he might not like it—he might think we did it on purpose."

"Nonsense, child!" said Mrs. Print. "He wouldn't think anything of the kind."

But Frank interposed here, proposing

that they should go and see the large basin where the water-fowl were. This proposal carried them all off, and they left the Con-Frank took them first among servatory. the shrubberies at the far side of the gardens, where there are pretty winding ways among foreign plants from all quarters of the globe, and then under spreading beech trees, and so round by the broad walk leading to the little old palace of the early Georges. And so they reached the large basin and the water-fowl. Here the party seated themselves opposite the water. They had not been there long when the same gentleman walked past without noticing them, and stood by the basin's edge. They were in the midst of talking of the birds and the water flashing in the sun, when Frank got up from his seat, and making an excuse of having dropped a glove, he thought, in the Conservatory, went away to find it. VOL. III.

were to stay where they were till he returned.

Presently the stranger by the basin turned towards them, and as if he had guessed their thoughts in the Conservatory, came up to them, and stood at one end of the seat—the end which Frank had left vacant.

"The birds seem to enjoy the sunny water," he said, addressing himself to Susan, who sat on that side.

"They do indeed," said Susan, naturally feeling as if the little Conservatory scene had made a kind of acquaintance; "they seem never tired of washing themselves."

"You like the water—it is a sparkling scene," said the stranger.

"Oh! yes," said Susan, in an animated voice; "I have lived almost all my life on the water—I mean for the last two years, and when I was quite a child too."

. "Did you indeed? I thought the Dutch

and the Chinese only lived their lives on the water."

"Oh! yes, in our barge here on the river," said Susan, innocently.

Here Mrs. Print gave her niece a great nudge. "Why did you tell him that?" she whispered. But Susan paid no attention to her.

"Ah! I know," said the stranger; "there are the Goldsmiths' barge, and the City barge, and the Lord Mayor's barge on the river."

"No, no," said Susan, laughing; "our barge wasn't so fine as those. I have seen all those go up and down the river; but ours was a small one, that belonged to a gentleman at Southwark, and my father managed it."

The stranger smiled quietly at this naïve statement of the fact, and the denial of the Lord Mayor and the Goldsmiths.

- "You must have gone to school," said he, "by your manner of speaking—how did you manage that?"
- "Oh! I went away from the barge for two or three years, and I went to school then, and before too."
 - "Do you like books?" said the stranger.
- "I never have read many books, and only my Bible and the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' and some stories, till I came to stay with my aunt at Richmond; but now I read a great many more, as my aunt is very kind to me, and she is very fond of books."

Mrs. Print could remain silent no longer, so, leaning forward in front of Susan, she said—

"My niece can have all the books in Richmond, if she likes, sir; and I do read a great many out to her, only she likes reading them to herself, and I tell her what they mean sometimes. Young Mr. Morrice

and I and my niece, we have readings together sometimes, and then we explain as we go along; and I can remember, as well as if it was yesterday, what Print—that was my husband, sir, who is dead—what he used to say was his opinion about particular books; and then I tell them what it was, and it's sure to be right, because the Prebends at York, and the Dean, and all the Cathedral used to come and ask Print what he thought about any new book when it was published; and they wouldn't have come if they had thought that Print didn't know."

"Here is a little book which is a great favourite of mine," said the stranger, with a grave, kind voice, quietly seating himself, and addressing Susan, and not replying to Mrs. Print's harangue. "I come into these gardens sometimes, and I always carry a book in my pocket, and I sit here and read

by the water, and I daresay you and your aunt come here too sometimes. If you would take this little book and read it, and some day, if I am fortunate enough to meet you here again, you will perhaps do me the favour to tell me what you think of its contents. It is biography of famous men, which is a charming kind of reading—a kind of romance of history, one may say; and these lives of great men teach us how great things are done and, in this way, of what life really consists. Will you do this for me?" As he said this he took a small, well-bound volume from his coat, and put it on the seat by her.

Susan was so taken by surprise by the speech, and by the whole manner, and by the act, that she did not know what to answer. She blushed over her cheeks and forehead, and began to stammer out something; so the stranger, seeing this, quietly

got up from his seat, and saying, "Thank you for doing what I ask," bowed to the two, and walked away.

"Well, I never saw anything like this in all my life—I never did!" exclaimed Mrs. Print, giving herself a slap with her right hand on her knee. "What extraordinary odd things do happen up about here! Romance of history, indeed! Upon my word, it seems to me to be all romance about here. Here we come in to take a walk, and up comes a gentleman we never saw before in our lives, except when he was in the Conservatory there, talking about the lilies, and the dyes, and the dresses, and I don't know what, till you all laughed out about something, though I didn't see what there was to laugh at, for my part; and then he comes here and walks up, and without your leave or by your leave, asks you all sorts of questions about your life on the river—though

what he had to do with that, and why you should tell him all about it, I can't for the life of me understand; and then he lends you a book. Mighty cool, I think, upon my word; as if I hadn't books enough at home without his, and, as I told him, you could have all the books in Richmond, if you liked."

During all this Susan had recovered herself, and had opened the book to see what it contained. Just at this juncture Frank returned, and leaning over the back of the seat, asked Susan what book she had there. So Mrs. Print related, in her usual lengthy style, what had occurred in his absence. Frank was highly amused at all this, and coming round, seated himself by Susan, and looked over her hand into the book.

"Is there any name in the fly-leaf?" said Frank.

"No. I looked there directly," replied

Susan. "I mean, directly I could, for I was so surprised that I didn't know what I was saying or doing. I wonder who he could be? The whole thing was so very strange, wasn't it?"

Frank agreed that it was all very odd—he couldn't make it out; he supposed the gentleman was some eccentric man who lived near the gardens, and if he saw him again he would ask about him. So he put the book in his pocket to carry home for Susan.

CHAPTER IV.

TOM had been wandering on foot for hours on the previous day in pursuit of Frank in the London streets. He had been nourishing only evil passions in his mind, indulging thoughts of criminal violence, and giving a loose rein to his savage temper. At the close of the day he had slept but little, his fevered mind acting on his restless body; and so in the morning he had risen from his bed unrefreshed and out of humour with all the world. But the long walk in the morning air from London by The Wick to Kew had quieted his nerves, and by the time he had reached the entrancegate of Kew Gardens he was subdued and fatigued. So he had thrown himself, as we have seen, on a bench, and fallen asleep. There he had slept the long, heavy sleep of exhaustion.

When he awoke, Tom sat up and stared about him. At first he could not make out where he was, it was all so strange to him. By degrees his morning walk and all its circumstances came back on him. As he sat there thinking over the past, it struck him that the day seemed to be going by. It was early when he came in there, and now, by the position of the sun, it was a good deal past midday. In fact, he had entered at ten, and now it was two. How long and heavily he must have slept!

While he was considering this, and also that he was hungry, and was preparing to go on to Richmond and have something to eat, and then look about for the barge and Susan, he heard voices approaching, people

coming along the pathway just outside the little recess in the shrubs where he had been sleeping. He gave a twitch to his hat to pull it over his eyes, and sat still. In a moment three figures passed along—two ladies and a gentleman. Turning his face a little, Tom looked out sideways from under his hat at them. They were talking merrily as they went by; the gentleman only turning his head and looking towards the sitting figure.

Tom saw him and recognised him. He half started to his feet, and then sat down again. "I'm darned—it's he as I'm alive!" Tom muttered, under his hat. The figures passed on. Presently Tom stole out from the recess, and looked after them. "That one nighest him be she—I'd swear to her anywheres, though she be so dressed up—and who be t'other?"

Frank—for the three figures were he and

his companions returning from their walk and going home—had observed the action of surprise of Tom, but went on, thinking little of it. When he had gone on some little way he turned round and looked back, and then he saw that tall sailor-man standing on the path by the recess and looking after them. In a moment it struck him that he had seen that figure before-where?why, at the door of the Travellers' Club on the previous day. Tom followed the party at a distance. Before they reached the houses, Frank again looked back, and saw the tall dark figure on the road. They went on through the town, and up the hill to the terrace, and then turned down the road to the cottage. Frank went with his companions to the little gate of the garden, and then taking out of his pocket the book which the gentleman had lent to Susan in the garden, he put it into her hands. Mrs.

Print invited him in; but Frank said he would not come in now, as his father wanted him at home in the afternoon. So Mrs. Print walked discreetly across the garden to the door.

Frank stopped Susan for an instant, and bending down to her and looking into her face, he said in a low tone, "It was my father who lent you that book." Susan threw up her clasped hands, with the book in them, with her usual little action of surprise. "Oh! your father! what—what did I say to him?"

"All right," said Frank gaily, "good-bye." And he walked away quickly, leaving Susan overcome with surprise. He went to the inn, got on his pony, and cantered home to The Wick. As he went along he said to himself, "That was that great hulking fellow in the lane that was in the gardens, like a Frenchman with his beard and earrings;

the same man I saw in Pall Mall yesterday.

What can he be doing about here?"

When Mrs. Print entered the house, she found luncheon ready, and she and Susan sat down to it, both of them hungry after their long morning walk. That over, Mrs. Print went upstairs, and, as a natural consequence of her morning performances, her walk and her luncheon, she fell sound asleep in her arm-chair by her bedside. was full of anxiety to look into her book, .now become an object of value in her eyes, whatever it might contain. She had not mentioned to her aunt what Frank had said, as he had not done so. It was, in a manner, a happy little secret between them, an event which was of an immense importance to her. The act, too, was as if meant for her alone. So Susan ensconced herself in the pretty little drawing-room in a chair in a corner, quite happy with her book and her

Had she not to think over all thoughts. that Frank had said to her during her walk, and then over this extraordinary event—his father talking to her for ever so long, and she not knowing it was him, not a bit? Then she remembered that Frank had asked her if she should like to see him; and when she had asked him if he was like Frank, he had said, "He is a little grey man." Susan smiled over this. It had been a plan of Frank and his father, and this description of him was to throw her off her guard and prevent all suspicion when he spoke to them. How they had both taken her in! Susan was pleased at all this little comedy. She remembered how kindly he had spoken to her on the seat by the water; and then that, all the time he was speaking to her, there was a something in his manner and his voice which she could not help feeling was not that of an entire stranger, and yet she had

never seen him before that day. Now this was explained; and she went over in her thoughts all the things she had said to him, and which he had said to her. How happy she was!

There was a Hyacinth standing in the window, and Susan got up to smell it nearer. She was fond of its delicate and refined scent. As she stood by the flower, her face bent to it, the window open beyond it, her eyes fell upon a tall figure of a man in a sailor's dress, with a beard, and a slouch hat on his head. He was leaning on the iron wicket-gate of the little garden. She did not recognise him.

"Susan," the man said, looking at her.

Still she did not recognise him; but she stared at him in mute surprise at his calling her by name.

"Susan," he repeated. Now she knew his voice—it was Tom. She was so startled at vol. III.

was to call her aunt. But then, in a moment, thinking that, if she did, there would be an angry scene when her aunt knew who it was, and that Tom might go away quietly if she spoke to him, she ran along the passage and opened the door. But Tom had opened the wicket, crossed the garden, and was near the door.

- "I must come in, Susan. I must have a word wi' you," he said abruptly
- "Oh, Tom! why did you come here?" said Susan.
- "I've found ye, and I must have a talk wi' ye. I shan't stop out there no longer. I'm a-coming in." And in he walked, Susan unable to prevent him. She went into the room she had left, and Tom following her, she shut the door.

- "My aunt is upstairs, so please don't talk very loud," she said in a low voice.
 - "Aunt!" said Tom, "what aunt?"
 - "Father's sister," said Susan.
 - "Never heerd tell on her."
- "No, very likely not. I did not know about her till a short time ago,—and I'm living here with her now."
- "What! left the barge?" said Tom in surprise.
 - "Yes, father lets me live with aunt."
- "Oh, that's the game, is it? and so then you can see that 'ere swell whenever you've a mind to't?"

The colour came up into Susan's face at this coarse speech.

- "Tom, if you are come here only to say these things, then I do not wish to see you at all."
- "In coorse you don't want me when you've a-got him. Look ye, Susan, I'm come

back, our ship foundered out at sea, and we got took back by another ship to the Guinea coast, and another ship brought me home, and I've done nothing but think o' you ever since I went away, and ever since I be come back. Ye knows as I liked ye allays, now don't ye?"

The man's voice softened as he stood there and said this.

"Tom, it's no use you're coming to tell me this; you shouldn't. When you went away that night down there, and you said you were going away somewhere, you know I told you it was best."

"Ah, best for you, Susan, in coorse it were—you had everything you wanted." He spoke mournfully. "Ye didn't want me."

"But it was best for you too; it was best for you to leave the barge, and go somewhere and get your living."

"Ay, I know that, but then I couldn't

abide going, ye see I couldn't; come now, Susan, jest let me heer ye say as ye know as I cared for ye—jest once, and then I'd go; in coorse ye wouldn't say as you did onst think as I warn't so bad as people said I were, you won't say that."

"Tom, you were kind to me always, I will say that, and I thank you for it."

"Ah, well, that's good in you, you always was good, Susan, better nor I was; and somehow you was like older and had more sense like, and I'd got to think that someday maybe, by-and-by, you'd make me better; and you knowed this, for I telled you so, didn't I now?"

"Yes, you did; and I used to tell you when you did foolish things."

"That was it, and I liked you to tell me I were foolish. It were pleasant days then, Susan, warn't it?"

"Yes, we hadn't many troubles then,"

said Susan, her thoughts running back to the time he spoke of.

"So we hadn't, Susan; you used to go in the boat and me a-sculling of ye, and times we had fishing. Them was pleasant days—ye don't forget them, do ye?"

"No, Tom, I shall never forget them."

"Thank ye for saying that." The man's voice broke a little. "I'd ha' slaved for ye day and night—ye didn't know that, but I would."

Susan was touched by the man's manner, as he stood there, leaning down towards her, his hat dropped on the floor, and his two brawny hands, a little apart, tretched out towards her in an attitude of entreaty. The tears came up into her eyes at the tone of the voice and the remembrance of the old simple days of barge life, before troubles came—Tom's troubles; and when they were as boy and girl together, and when she did

not dislike being with him, her first lover, though she had never had any thought for him beyond a girlish pleasure in his kind ways and words to her. She turned away a moment to hide her tears, and then the present situation came back on her. She spoke kindly.

"But, Tom, there is no use in talking of what's gone. You should think of doing something; what are you going to do?"

She was afraid every moment that her aunt would come down stairs and find him there, and she felt his staying and talking were of no use. But this speech and question sounded to Tom like a sudden shutting out from his eyes of the pleasant world of the past, when he and Susan talked in the boat as he sculled her, and she gave him good advice, and he was happy in being called foolish by her. In a moment all this seemed banished by her few words

"Do?—what am I to do? I wish anybody'd tell me." He spoke sadly.

"Shouldn't you be better away?—away from the river? or perhaps father would put you in the way of something, if you were to go and see him."

"Go and see him? Why—I did go to the wharf, and the barge were up; but no—I shan't stop. I only went there to see for you, and I ain't a-going to stop in this here country to be bothered by any of 'em." His voiceand manner here changed suddenly, and became harsh and sullen. "But afore I goes I'll be even wi' him, that I means to be."

"What do you mean?" said Susan, in a tone of alarm.

"What do I mean? Ah, what do I mean? Never you mind. I ain't a-going to let him have it all his own way here when my back's turned, not if I knows it."

"Who are you talking of, Tom, in that

way?" said Susan, now thoroughly frightened.

"Who? Why, somebody as ain't very far off; he must look out for hisself. I heerd they swells there in London a-talking and a-larfing over it down here, and I ain't a-going to have my nose put out o' joint by any o' they cussed swells."

Now his voice was no longer sullen, but loud, and his face worked with passion. Instead of standing still, as he had done before, in front of Susan, he now walked up and down the little room with unequal step, his broad-brimmed hat in his left hand, which he shook now and then fiercely in front of him, the right hand clenched and working with savage energy.

"Tom!" cried Susan, "you don't dare touch him!"

He stopped suddenly. "So you know who I mean, then?"

- "He never hurt you," said Susan warmly.
- "Never hurted me? Never hurted me? Didn't he? Why, he tooked ye away from me, that's what he did; ain't that enough?"
- "It's not true," said Susan with growing energy in her alarm; "it's not true; he never took me from you. I never should have married you—never!"
- "And ye be a-thinking as he'll marry you, be ye? Not he. Do ye s'pose as a swell like he 'll marry a bargeman's daughter off the river? Why, he'd larf in yer face, if you axed him."
- "How dare you say such things?—how dare you? What do you know about gentlemen to talk in that way?"
- "Ah, you s'pose I don't know what they swells be, a set o' rotten beggars!"
- "You're a fool, Tom, to talk in that way; you knownothing whatever about them—nothing; you don't know anything of what they

think or what they do, and then you believe them to be as bad and as low-minded as yourself."

"Ay, ay, I dare say—don't know 'em, indeed! Why, I'd lay a trifle as he paid for some o' those fine——"

Just at that moment the door opened, and in walked Mrs. Print. Seeing a large, roughly-dressed man standing there, and her niece looking very pale and frightened, the little woman stood a moment holding the door. She had heard a loud, harsh voice below in the drawing-room as she awoke from her comfortable nap, listened a few moments, and then descended quickly.

"Hoity-toity! what's all this about?" she said, leaving the door open, and going towards Tom. "Pray who are you, coming here, and making all this to-do?"

Susan went quickly between her aunt and Tom.

"It's Tom, aunt; the young man who was on board father's barge."

Mrs. Print put Susan aside with her hand.

"Please to walk out of my house this minute," she said, addressing Tom. "How dare you come here and make a noise with your loud voice might be heard all down the street?"

Tom was rather quelled for an instant by this sudden and resolute attack. "I come here to have a talk with Susan, and I'd like to know where's the harm in having a word wi' her."

"Harm! Yes, there is a great deal of harm in a man like you coming in without leave or licence, and disturbing the whole house. Why, she's as white as a ghost. What business have you to come here and frighten people? You might have had the civility to ask for me—this is my house—instead of walking in like a great bear, and

setting up a bellowing as would wake the dead if they——"

"There, hold your clack, old lady," said Tom, very irreverently, to that respectable matron—he was irritated afresh by this continued onslaught, "I haven't nothing to say to you. There, good-bye, Susan; I don't forget, mind." He brushed rudely by Mrs. Print, and went through the door, and walked rapidly out. Susan followed him. "Oh! Tom, you didn't mean what you said," she cried; but he never turned. He dashed through the wicket-gate, merely waved his hand back, and was gone.

"My goodness gracious, Susan, what's the meaning of all this?" said Mrs. Print, following her into the garden. "What in the world do you go running after that horrid man for? Here I'm awoke out of my nap by a voice like I don't know what, and when I come down, and hardly know if I'm

on my head or my heels, from being so giddy with being woke up in that way—and always have been ever since I had a fall getting out of the chaise and came with my head bang against the curbstone by our door at York."

During this speech Susan had stood looking over the wicket-gate at the retreating form of Tom, in the hope that he might turn and come back. But he went on round a corner, and was out of sight. Then she turned round, crying,

"Oh! aunt, I don't know what I shall do. I am so miserable!"

"Why, my goodness, child, what's all this?" And the little woman, subdued by the sight of Susan's tears, put her arm round her and took her indoors. Susan went sobbing along the passage, and into the drawing-room, and then laid herself down on the sofa in a burst of weeping. Mrs. Print for a moment was completely at a nonplus. She felt that something had gone seriously wrong. She stood for a minute by the sofa, for she had never seen the usually quiet Susan like this before. She was the least bit frightened. Then she slipped out of the room on tiptoe, and in a few minutes she came back again with a glass in her hand. Seating herself by Susan, and leaning over her, she kissed her cheek, and said, "Don't cry—don't cry; be a good child, and sit up. Here's something for you—nothing like a good glass of ginger wine—now drink it up and you'll be better, and tell me all about it."

After a few more sobs Susan sat up and drank the wine.

"It is so dreadful, aunt; and Tom, he's so angry, I'm sure he'll kill him—I know he will."

- "Kill who, my dear?—who's going to be killed?"
- "Tom—he's so angry, and he made such horrid threats. I know what he meant."
- "Tom made threats!—what about?—about who?"
- "About him, you know. Tom hates him, because he says he liked me first, and he took me away from him; and it isn't true—not a bit true."

Mrs. Print pondered over this a little. It was evident that there was something serious, and this steadied her.

"Now, Susan, just tell me what this young man Tom has been saying; he's a very bad young man."

So Susan related to her aunt the principal part of what had passed between her and Tom, passing over parts, and dwelling on the principal part—the threats.

"Why, this is the young man that there

were all those suspicions about at the inquest, of course—now I remember—and they thought he was the man that killed the young man. Why, my goodness gracious! what a dreadful man! And then to come here—how in the world did he find you out?"

"I don't know," said Susan. "I was sitting in that corner by the window, so happy, thinking over all about our walk this morning, and reading the book that—that—that gentleman lent me to read in the garden, and I just got up and looked out of window, and there was Tom leaning over the gate, and he came in."

"He's a very wicked man," said Mrs. Print; "and I'm sure I don't know what ought to be done—let me think."

"Could anybody go and tell——" began Susan.

Mrs. Print interrupted. "Why, what's vol. III.

to prevent my telling the constable?—and he'd go and look after this man till he found him, and stop him."

"No, aunt, you mustn't do that. You know there is the suspicion about that other thing; and if we were to tell the constable about him, then it might come out that he was Tom; and then they'd take him up, perhaps, and Tom would think it was I set them on to take him, and I couldn't bear that."

"What! not when he's threatening to kill young Mr. Morrice?"

"No, no, aunt," and Susan hid her face in her hands—"I couldn't do that—I mustn't do that. No, no; Tom is very wicked—I know that; but then I was on the barge ever so long with Tom, and he used to be kind to me, and I'd do anything I could to save him. Poor Tom! he was

always foolish, and used to say foolish things, and he always let me tell him how wrong he was, and he always promised me he'd be better. Poor Tom! I couldn't do anything against him like that."

"Then what's to be done?" said Mrs. Print. "Why, we may be all murdered in our beds by men going about the country with their—"

Just then a step was heard—a heavy step—coming along the gravel path up to the house door, and a ring at the bell. Susan started up—"Perhaps it's Tom come back!" she exclaimed, as she stood there, pale and trembling.

"My goodness! I hope not," said Mrs. Print, going to the door, as she heard voices in the passage. "It's Joe, I declare! Of all the men in the whole world, you're the very man we wanted. Now come in, you

dear old Joe—yes, here's Susan—how glad I am to see you! Now you'll tell us all what we must do—we're in a rare peck of troubles—it seems to me we're always in something here—out of one to-do into another."

"What be it all about?" said Harding, in a cheery way, when he had kissed his sister and Susan. "Suz been a-crying? What is it, lass?"

The tears welled up in Susan's eyes again. "Oh! father, I am so unhappy!"

"Well, well," said Harding, kissing her again, and laying one great brawny hand on her head as she rested it on his rough coat, and folding the other round her, "don't ye take on, Suz, don't ye take on. What is it, Jenny?—what is it? I daresay it'll all come straight, let it be whatsever it will."

"It's that young man's doing," said Mrs.

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Print—"that young man that you had on the barge; and he's been here and frightened her."

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"Tom!" exclaimed Harding—"Tom been here!—never!"

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"Yes," said Susan, tearfully, "he was here. I don't know how he came to know we were here. He was so changed, I didn't know him at first, not a bit—he has got a great beard all over his face, and earrings in his ears—you never saw how he is changed."

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"I be main sorry he's back, that I be," said Harding, looking very grave.

"That you may, Joe; and you'll be more sorry than ever when you hear. Now, Joe, you and Susan sit down there on the sofa, and I'll sit here, and I'll tell you all about it. First, you must know we went to Kew Gardens this morning with young Mr. Morrice, and there a strange gentleman—Heaven

only knows who he may be—some dreadful creature perhaps——"

"Aunt, dear," Susan interrupted, "that has not much to do with what Tom said here."

"Of course it has, Susan. Why, wasn't it the long walk in the gardens that tired me so, that I went to sleep after my lunch, and that horrid young man's voice woke me up and sent me spinning downstairs as giddy as a goose. Of course it was—you shouldn't interrupt, child—and then—"

"And what did Tom say to Susan?" said Harding, seeing that it was necessary to keep his sister's attention steadily to the main point—"let's hear about Tom."

Mrs. Print, being thus in a manner pinned to her subject, told her brother tolerably connectedly what had passed. When she broke off into some side path from the main road, Harding brought her back by the words—"And Tom?—about Tom?" when

she always said, "My dear Joe, that's just what I was telling you."

When Harding had heard it all he shook his head, and looked very grave. Mrs. Print again slightly suggested the constable. but Harding at once objected. No, this would be of no use in the present case, as Tom had only uttered some wild threats, and the constable could do nothing; and, besides, an application to the constable would, of course, bring about a question of who Tom was; and this would be likely to deliver him up for examination on suspicion of the affair by the osiers, and this he would not like to Tom was the son of an old mate, and risk. had been in his barge for two or three years, and more. When her father said this, Susan put her hand on his quietly, and gave it a little soft pressure.

"But I'll tell ye what I can do, and what I must do," said Harding, "this here very night. I must go down to The Wick and see young Mr. Morrice, and jest put him on his guard, d'ye see, Suz? That'll be only fair towards him, won't it?"

Susan didn't answer, but she looked in her father's face with her eyes full of tears and a smile on her lips, and gave him a little nod of approval.

What a comfort and a pillar of support was this strong, uncultivated man, with his few words, and his plain view of what should be done, and what should not be done! But the strong man had evidently been overcome by the two women in the matter of the coming of Frank Morrice to the cottage, and of the general relations of its inmates with those of The Wick.

CHAPTER V.

Wick to have two or three friends every now and then from London, or the neighbourhood, to dine with him and Frank, and play a rubber of whist. Often in the winter season this would be the order of things. Everybody liked to dine at The Wick, because there was, first, a capital cook; and, secondly, because Mr. Morrice was himself good company, and he collected good company round him; and, thirdly, because he played whist well, and liked good players. To hear him discourse upon whist, anyone would see that he held it as not only a capital game for amusement, but something

more—a game of brain against brain, intellect against intellect, an exercise of memory and calculation, and an opportunity for the play of delicate finesse and keen observation—a game in which art shone out, and showed its mastery over dulness and common-place blundering, the cards for weapons. "Whist is a game of fence," he would say. "Give two artists moderate cards and they will punish two dolts with better. A skilful player with his weapon runs his antagonist through the midriff, while he, poor dullard, is looking out for his visage."

This custom was to be duly observed on the evening of that day described in the last chapter, when Frank had taken his walk with Mrs. Print and Susan in Kew Gardens. He had cantered home, but had, as usual, lingered a little about the stables talking with Dick. In fact, he had rather hung about there with a half-fear in his mind of what his father might think and say about Susan, after seeing her. Frank had a very high respect for his father's opinion in all matters, and especially in those where taste was concerned—that delicate sense which some few are born with, and the many are born without. He found his father in the library, expecting his guests for dinner. When he entered, Mr. Morrice's face reassured him.

- "What an actor you are, Dad!" said Frank gaily. "I never knew you had robbed the stage before."
 - "What do you mean, Frank?"
- "Why, in the gardens—you did that scene in the conservatory with Mrs. Print to perfection."
- "To tell you the truth, my boy, I was rather put to my trumps there. You took me by surprise. I counted on meeting your party by the water, as we arranged, and was

having a quiet chat with the gardener when you must have come in. Luckily he was called away, for he knew me and you, or I should have been obliged to fly for fear of discovery. I think I did get through that about the white lily and the dye pretty well."

"It was a first-rate performance. You came out as the professor admirably; and they hadn't the ghost of a suspicion. I had just told Susan that you were a small grey man, to keep her mind free when you should come up."

"A small grey man!—upon my life you are as inventive, Frank, as Walter Scott, or Matthews."

As they stood on the rug side by side, father and son, there was little difference of height—five feet ten.

"I was very nearly found out," said Frank; "the little comedy made me laugh, just behind them, when you were so sententious, and Mrs. Print so discursive about the blue dress. I broke down then utterly."

"That is an odd character, that aunt, with her impetuous way of relating her experiences and enunciating her opinions. She comes quite up to what you told me of her."

"She is a good creature," said Frank, "with all her odd ways."

Frank had been waiting with some impatience for his father's opinion of Susan. Now it came.

"You will of course wish to know what I think of your young friend. As far as I can judge by such a slight acquaintance, she seems a very natural character, which, by the way, is the foundation of all that is good in a woman, for that means truth and goodness. I must say, Frank, your taste is not at fault as regards her face. It is a

charming face—and that too means a great deal, because there must be expression to deserve that title; and it is very nearly a beautiful face too in feature."

"Thank you, Dad," said Frank, his eyes sparkling with satisfaction, and putting his arm round his father, as if he were still the boy.

"Her way of replying to my questions about her life was just what it should have been," Mr. Morrice continued—"simple and truthful—no attempt at shirking or evading. I asked her about the barge, and I saw the aunt give her a jog when she was telling me about it. The aunt didn't like that—thought it of course letting herself down, and so on, and that I was an impertinent sort of man, who had no business with it; but your friend stuck to it—didn't understand what the aunt was at, I'll be bound. I tried to lead her off about the Lord

Mayor's barge and the Goldsmiths'; but she wasn't to be led away—told it all to me in the most natural way, with her face as happy and as beaming as if she had been telling me of a club yacht and a sail off Cowes. I liked her for that. I daresay the aunt gave it her roundly for it afterwards."

Frank laughed gaily—in fact, his thoughts were so full of contentment and happiness at the success of the little scheme with his father at Kew, that he was ready to laugh like a boy at anything his father might now say.

"I know she did," said Frank; "but Susan was thoroughly dense as to any impropriety in what she had done. She was charmed with your book—really quite overcome by the act."

"Ah! I thought of that at the last moment, and put it in my pocket. I go up

know, and always have a volume of something with me. It gave me a good opportunity to make her a little speech, and then slip away. I am afraid, Master Frank, you will be apt to judge from this that I had a kind of an expectation I should like her enough to give it her. But don't you be too sure I should have given it her, if I had not been pleased. If she had made some silly slip about the barge question, and had listened to the aunt when she jogged her on it, I am not sure but I should have hesitated, I can tell you."

"She's as true as steel, Dad—I'll answer for her," said Frank, earnestly.

"I hate pretension, Frank, as you know. You should thank God she has none of that odious quality in her. This a mean quality in man or woman. Show me a pretentious man, and I know what's in him directly.

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ıd e Never trust him; he'll throw you over for something better that turns up in a moment. Never pretend to be above what you are; and if fortune gives you a lift, never forget what you were."

- "I'll lay my life she will never do that," said Frank.
- "It will be a hard trial for her; for of course you will marry her—that of course—and here she will be on the river, and the barges going up and down, just the same as in her old life. What will she do? Will it be a problem, Frank?"
- "No, no; I have been thinking of that, and I shall let her alone, and not put anything into her head; but it's more than an even chance that she starts something or other about these very barges. She won't turn her back on them, I'm certain, from what I have heard her say."
 - "I like your trust in her—it looks well vol. III.

for your future. What is a man worth who has no trustingness in his nature?"

Just then the guests arrived. Dinner was served. Mr. Morrice was in high spirits. The little events of the morning had amused him as well as interested him. He had gratified his curiosity as to his son's future wife, and he had been pleased and surprised at her appearance and her manners. He had feared, and yet wished to see her; but now he had been very agreeably disappointed; and he sat with his guests, and was full of sparkling conversation, with the feeling in his heart that he had made his son very happy, and had also suffered less than he had expected in his sacrifice of social art at the shrine of Nature.

The dinner was over, and there was just that little droop in conversation before the something else—the expected something else—arrives in the process of entertainment from the dinner-table to the drawingroom, when the butler, Parkins, came up to Frank with a slip of paper on a salver. Frank was already on his legs, in the act of leaving the table. He took up the paper, and read in pencil in rude characters, "Joseph Harding."

"Is he there?" said Frank to the old man.

"He've been here above this hour, sir, waiting, but I couldn't come in to tell ye till ye was a-going into cards."

"Show him into the library—I'll go there now." His father had not observed anything. Frank walked to the library with the feeling in his mind that this was rather a singular circumstance. "Could anything have happened to Susan?"

Presently Harding entered. The fine burly man walked in, and then, seeing Frank, he stopped by the door and made him a bow.

"What is it, Harding?" said Frank, advancing to him, and holding out his hand, and speaking kindly. "Come in and sit down. Here, Parkins, bring the port-wine and some glasses."

Harding hesitated a moment, and then he sat down, as desired, and Frank did the same.

"I'm main sorry to trouble you, sir, and I ask your pardon for coming at this time of night; but I come earlier, and your people they wouldn't disturb you at your dinner."

"I'm sorry you had to wait, Harding," said Frank.

"No call to be that, sir; but I had something to tell you on which you might be vexed if I didn't tell you, and which you did ought to know." And then Harding related to Frank the story of Tom's coming to Richmond, and his interview with Susan.

"Why, that must be the man I saw in the gardens, and afterwards on the road by Mrs. Print's cottage—a large, hulking fellow, with a beard."

"That's he, sir, sure enough," said Harding.

"And so that's Tom Plank, is it?—he's changed," said Frank, "since that day I saw him at Wilcox's wharf—the first day I saw you."

"I mind it, sir—that were a day or two arter you was in the river arter the pup."

"I should not have recognised him as the same in that big fellow with the beard." Here Parkins brought in the port-wine, and Frank poured out a glass for Harding and another for himself. "Here's your health, Harding, and thank you for coming to tell me this." Harding drank his wine, and thought it, as he said afterwards to his sister, "rare tackle." "That fellow must have been away somewhere," continued Frank, "since the inquest, eh, Harding?—out of sight?"

"From what my daughter says, he've a-been on the Africa coast—his ship foundered on the voyage out to Melbourne, and he were picked up and took there, and so he worked home back again."

"A pity he did," said Frank. "If they find him here he'll be in trouble about that other business."

"That's what I've been a-saying up there; and so d'ye see, sir, though Tom's a goodfor-little sort o' lad, I shouldn't wish to have a hand in getting him into worse trouble."

"Ah, I see—you wouldn't like to hurt him more than you can help," said Frank.

"Ye see, sir, he were aboard the barge along o' me for a time, and he be the son of my old mate, Abram Plank—me and him was boys together, and I said I'd look arter the boy, and so I did when Abram died."

- "He was no relation of yours, then?" said Frank.
 - "Not a ounce o' blood atwixt us!"
- "I suppose," said Frank, "you have no kind of guess as to his whereabouts to-night?"

"I walked all over Richmond," said Harding, "for a hour and more afore I come on here, but I never set eyes on him. I'd ha' had it out with him, sure enough, if I'd a-come on him. Ye see, sir, I couldn't ask much about him, for fear o' putting people up to something—talking, maybe."

Frank considered a little time, and then he said, "Where are you to-night—up at Richmond, or on the barge?"

"I telled 'em up there I'd come back arter

I'd seen you, sir, and my sister she wanted me to stop the night."

"Perhaps you had better do so. If he really means mischief he won't be long about it, as he won't stay long about here, for fear of being seen and recognized. He may go back to London to-night, and lie quiet for a day or two, to put us off our guard, or he may hang about here to-morrow or next day. He might lie in the osiers safe enough all day. He seemed well dressed, so I daresay he has some money. Clearly he has some means of information about your family, else how came he in the gardens yesterday, and then at Richmond?"

"He telled my daughter he were at the wharf and heerd the barge were up, and then he may ha' come here from what somebody said in London yesterday about Richmond, as he telled her."

"Now I think of it," said Frank, "I saw this man yesterday at the door of my Club in London when I was getting into my carriage to come down here; and, by-the-way, he followed us from the gardens, for I saw him in the road."

"That's it, sir, he've been a-follering you about," said Harding, earnestly.

"At all events, thank you for coming, Harding," said Frank, rising from his chair. "Now, good night. Have another glass of wine before you go."

Harding declined this, and then Frank dismissed him, saying, "he must take his chance, and if Tom got himself into trouble, he would have no one but himself to thank for it."

Harding was going out, when he stopped and turned round quickly. "You'll please to mind, sir, as how Tom—he's—I don't know, and nobody don't know—but you'll please to mind about that young Tapps, sir!"

"Yes, yes, I remember—all right," said Frank, heartily.

As Harding walked back to Richmond he thought over Frank and his interview, and he wound up his opinion of him thus-"Whatever could Jenny be a-thinking of as he'd say they things. There warn't a morsel o' bounce in the whole concern. Why, he talked jest as easy as Mr. Charles. did that day as I see him arter the inquest. That's what I call a downright right sort o' gentleman! Anyhow, I done my duty by him, and Suz'll be content. Maybe 'twere only brag o' Tom arter all, and he'll go away quiet. If he don't, Tom must look arter hisself pretty sharp, for that young gentleman's a ugly customer, or my name ain't Joseph Harding."

When Frank entered the drawing-room,

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the party were deep in whist. No one seemed to have missed him. So he stood before the fire and thought over the communication of Harding. He made up his mind to one thing—that he would say nothing of the matter to his father-"Only worry and bother him, perhaps, and do no good;" besides, he might take it into his head to take some step in the affair, and quietly set a constable or two on the watch, and so do the thing that Harding did not wish, and which he evidently trusted in Frank's honour that he would not do. His father. would be bound by no such claim on him, and would only look to his son's safety and regard Tom as a kind of wild beast, to be caught and caged, if possible; and if he got into trouble, would consider that that was Tom's look out, and not his. was fearless, and he came to the conclusion that Tom was quite capable of doing something very nasty; and that as, in his opinion, he had certainly killed Bob Tapps, so he was quite the man to do another person a bad turn. Moreover, he knew that there were stories and suspicions affoat that the blow which killed young Tapps was meant for himself; and he instinctively was aware that the same spirit which had actuated that blow was still impelling the giver of it to inflict a similar one. He knew, or suspected, that the same cause existed—the hatred of himself on account of Susan; and he knew that Tom had seen him with Susan on that very day. What Harding had told him of the threats to Susan almost proved that this was the cause of the former blow. Evidently Tom was a desperate character capable of any violence under the influence of his jealous passion. Frank wound up his reflections with this settled intention—"Two can play at that, Master Tom-you must look out for yourself, or you'll be in the wrong box yourself."

When the whist-party broke up, and the guests were gone, Mr. Morrice said quietly, "What became of you after dinner, Frank?—you disappeared."

"Only a man wanted to speak to me," replied Frank.

So the matter dropped.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Tom left the cottage he was in a towering rage. Susan had clearly, though in a kind manner, given him to understand that she did not care for him; and the effect of his threats on her had shown him for whom she did care. Then the manner in which she had told him that he was altogether ignorant of the minds and thoughts of gentlemen had stung him. She had told him he was but a low fellow in comparison with them. Then the way in which he had been turned out of the house by Mrs. Print, in the presence of Susan, was gall to him. And the cause of all this

insult and contumely was that man whom he hated in the bottom of his soul.

Tom walked down the town, and then he suddenly turned up the hill towards the park. He did not want to go back to Kew. He determined that he would go to Mort-He did not know his way there except by the river, so he stopped a woman, and asked her if he could get there by another road. She told him he could go there through the park, and gave him directions. So he entered the gates, and walked quickly along the road which leads to an entrance from the village of Sheen. felt quite sure he would not be known by anyone in Sheen, which was quite strange to him; and so, on reaching that hamlet, he entered the first public-house he came to and had some dinner. His long day of walking without food since his early breakfast had completely tired him; so, after he

had finished his dinner, he went to bed. His walk over the park had cooled his anger in a degree, and the effect of the open air of the country during the whole day composed him.

In the morning Tom got up refreshed He sauntered about and re-invigorated. the little garden of the inn, talked to the landlord, and gained his attention by two or three stories about Africa. An unfailing attraction to people living a quiet life in retired places is a story about foreign countries. He had no particular object in view. His mind roved from subject to subject without any definite aim or wish. His threats of vengeance on Frank contained no direct plan; they were only general. Now he thought over Susan and her denial of him, and her almost distinct avowal of regard for Frank. And then he thought of what she had recommended him to do-to

go away and make a life for himself. Yes. he could go: but there was no inducement to him to do this—no Susan at the end of Then his thoughts wandered off to Africa and his life there. Should he again start for Australia? And then they wandered back to the old former days on board the barge. He could settle on no planform no scheme—his mind a vague uncertainty. He told himself that he had lost Susan totally, and therefore there was nothing to keep him here in England. Then why not go? Then surged up in his thoughts the figure of Frank, and the threats he had himself uttered to Susan. Did he really mean them, or was he only impelled to make them by fierce anger and jealousy? So he wandered about all the morning.

About mid-day Tom walked off towards
Barnes Common, and so down to the river
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He strolled along the edge of at Barnes. the towing-path, and sat down on the side of an old broken and wrecked boat lying near it. Beyond the river was a long and wide bed of osiers, which extended up and down the bank for a mile or two. Beyond the osier-beds, at half a mile distance, rose the line of the towering trees of The Wick —the grand old Spanish chestnuts with their thick bushy heads, and the fringe of spreading elms. How well Tom knew them!—too well! In that right-hand corner were the walnut-trees—bearers of the fatal fruit which had cost him so much. As he looked and recognised them, he seemed to feel again the stinging in his back. He clenched his fist at the memory. He got up and walked on a little. Here were several boats moored in the stream, some of them neatly covered with light-coloured canvas to protect them from sun and from

rain. Two or three were moored at one buoy. Tom stopped and looked at them with an idle curiosity. He had seen such hundreds of times in his river life, and he now in a careless kind of way criticized the fastenings of the canvas and the build of the boats. Other boats were in the water at anchor, and one or two common heavy skiffs were pulled up on the shore. A waterman slouched up to Tom and said carelessly—"Going on the water?"

Tom did not answer at first, and then he said gruffly, "Yes. I want a cast over." And then he added, "Left something over there in the osiers t'other day. Let me have a boat for a couple o' hours?"

"Couple o' hours? Where to go?"

"I tell ye—over there. Lost something there t'other day. I give ye a trifle to let me have a boat, and bring her back in a couple o' hours." "A trifle?" said the man. "There ain't no call for money twixt brother watermen, for I s'pose you be on the water somewheres, though ye have got them things in yer ears. Stand a pint when ye come back, and ye can have the boat and welcome."

So Tom agreed to stand the pint on his return, and getting in, sculled himself over to the osiers. He paddled leisurely along, the tide running up. There are numerous small shallow indentings or bays along the edge of the irregular bank by the osier-beds, some of them running in twelve or fifteen Short projections of the bank run out feet. and inclose partially these diminutive bays. The osiers, in their longest growth, hang out over their sides, and people draw up their boats there when the tide is up, and lie there in the shade in summer days and eat their luncheon, or read books, fastened to the osier stocks by chain or cord. When

Tom was opposite Mortlake, towards its higher end, he ran his boat into one of these. Of course it was an invention of the moment that he had lost anything in the osiers. When in this bay his boat was completely hidden to those passing along the water near the bank, until they were close upon it. Tom lay here for some little time, and then, getting on to the bank, he fastened up his boat, and made his way through the osiers to the He crossed some rough ground other side. beyond, and then came to a low fence which bounded a fruit-garden belonging to The Wick, a long, narrow garden, at the bottom Crossing this he reached the of the park. park wall. Some fruit-trees aiding him, he clambered to the top, and then could see the park and grounds all spread out before him.

Tom had still no definite idea or plan of anything, but there seemed a strange fasci-

nation for him about The Wick. All his troubles seemed connected with it, and all his interests. Underneath all the vagueness of his mind, and the indecision as to any plan of life for the future, there lay one feeling-Susan, and with it Frank. held him and directed his actions, in spite of If he should go away from this himself. neighbourhood, it would be as a severance of himself from all that filled his circle of existence. Susan, he knew, was not far off -at Richmond-living there-within a few miles; and he went over again his last meeting with her, as he sat on the wall. felt that the new position—the better house -the something of added refinement in her dress and appearance—made her even more attractive than before. To him she was a superior and a beautiful person—beautiful in form and feature—superior in her kind and gentle manner and her good advice to

him—superior even in her anger and her resentment of his own hardness and violence. And where was Frank? He did not know. Perhaps he was again at Richmond, perhaps in London, perhaps talking with Susan, perhaps laughing with his friends in the big house at the West End. But perhaps he was at The Wick there in front of him.

Close to Tom and all around him was the part of the park called the Wilderness—a place of clumps of trees and open sward, of dips and dells, of bushes by the lake, and of solitary elms and larch. Tom scanned all this with curious eye, as if searching for something or someone. There was no one in sight. The park beyond the woody Wilderness lay in sunshine, visible through vistas. Horses and cows and sheep were feeding over it in groups among the tall and spreading trees. There was, now and then, the neigh of a horse heard out on the

sward, while the hoarse bass bleat of the ewes, replied to by the shrill treble of the numerous lambs, was continual. Lambs in small bodies were racing up and down the sides of the dip from the park into the hollows of the Wilderness. A low rail separated the one from the other, and the lambs passed under this, and had the slopes to themselves and their gambols. A woodpigeon, on the top of one of the feathery red cypresses on the island in the lake, cooed out its long plaintive note at intervals, and another answered it from a solitary acacia standing on a bank in the park near the far-off end of the lake. Now and then a coot or a dabchick fluttered out of its nest in the low privet bush on the water's edge, and skimmed along the surface to the bushes on the opposite bank, and a bright green and gold kingfisher darted down from some branch into the pool on its prey, and then hurried along it to some other sheltered branch.

Tom marked all these sounds and sights with a vaguely observant eye and ear, as if each sound or movement had an indirect interest for him within that enclosed ground. At last, as if satisfied that there was no use in waiting longer, he turned, and dropped off the wall into the garden; and so strolled back again to the boat. It was a warm, sunny day. He lay down in the boat, and presently fell asleep.

When Frank awoke on that morning he awoke with the sensation so common to us under circumstances, that something has happened which is not pleasant. In a few moments the cause of this presented itself to him—Harding's visit of the evening before, and Tom. As he dressed himself, he thought over the occurrences of the previous day. "How happy she was," he said to

himself, "in the gardens, in the conservatory when we had that laugh at her aunt going off about the dyers and her dress. nearly I let it all out when Dad was stooping down there and examining the lily stems like an old botanical professor. And then when she had the book by the water, how she was surprised and pleased as Punch with Dad's courtly manners and speech; and all the way home as chirpy and gay as a bird. Then when I told her who he was that gave her the book, her look of pretty surprise and a little alarm—there's nothing prettier at the Corner, or anywhere else, though Dad does say this is all out of the right line of art. Well, it is not an Art Union—no, perhaps not. What then? It is better than a mere Art Union, and so Dad confesses. Perhaps it is a case of Natural Selection, as Darwin would say. Of course my case is an exception to the rule of art,

and it wouldn't do to be breaking through this rule every day in the week—spoil it. I know that; not such an idiot as not to know that no society could go on without workers and payers, ranks and classes, though there are men who argue themselves into notions that pot-boys and Newtons are just the same, and Shakspeare on a par with old Sangster. As men with their ten fingers and toes under the surgeon's hand, of course they are the same; but Society, Mr. Philosopher, Society—that's another affair. Social race-horses and social cart-horses. Oh, dear, there goes the break-I hope old Parkins won't let out fast bell. that Harding was here last night. I forgot to give him a hint. That scoundrel, Tom, to go and give her such a fright, and frighten away all her pretty happiness of the day with his disgusting threats! Very well, Mr. Tom, it's a pity you didn't stay away when you were away. Because Susan was kind to

you, that is no reason why you should come and bother her and bully her. I am pretty sure she is behind that dislike of Harding to put the constables on your track, because of old acquaintance; that's kind of her, and shows a true womanly heart; but you are, for all that, a scoundrel, Master Tom. You did that poor fellow Bob a bad turn, and now you think of doing the same by me; but if I meet you, and you try any of your tricks, you must look out for yourself, for I'll break your stupid head as sure as your name is Tom." So Frank went down to breakfast.

After breakfast, Mr. Morrice proposed that they should go and look at the young fillies, Liz and Lady Anna, and the others, in the breaking stable. They were all standing on their bits, with saddles on their backs, ready to go out for their daily exercise—going through their education, in fact. Mr. Morrice delighted in these young things.

So now he talked to them and handled them all in turn, examined their bridles, tried their saddles and girths—if they fitted properly, listening to Dick and any suggestions he had to offer. Of course the trusted and sagacious Dick, gnostic in all matters of horse-flesh, had many to make; and his master intelligently combated some of these, and consented to others. Frank looked on and listened, and profited, and then talked over all the points of the animals with his father.

All this took time, and the morning wore away.

The stable visit being over, they strolled into the flower-garden, bright already in parts with the early flowers of the Spring. It was a warm bright sunny morning, and they talked over the flowers and the plants.

"By the way, Dad," said Frank, as they passed through the Haarlem gates of the

garden, "what did you do last night at whist?"

"Altogether badly. My good friend, Luscombe, is a moderate hand at it; that is, he is clever at parts of the game, plays his own hand well enough when he has a good one; but he has the vice of not knowing that he has a partner. If his own hand is good, he can play it; if bad, he is unhappy. say, Frank, when you are married, don't play your own hand only; mind your partner's, or you won't win in the game of life. So Luscombe and I lost our money. With a good man opposite to me, knowing the game is one of partners, it would have been otherwise. We had cards enough, it wasn't their By-the-by, Luscombe and I had a dispute over a quotation. I felt pretty sure I was right. You don't happen to be going in the direction of Barnes, do you? If you were, I'd send him a line with the quotation

copied out. I found it after they were gone last night. You know his house, on the river."

"Yes, I know it," said Frank. "I was thinking of a scull down to Mortlake. I have a word to say to Codling, and I was going to see Humpy, the baker. He is an old ally of mine, and an odd fish. He has been in the doctor's hands; those legs of his will kill him some day."

"He, and mother," said Mr. Morrice, smiling. "I know him—he is rather a character."

"If you will write your note to Luscombe," said Frank, "I will take it."

So Mr. Morrice wrote his note and copied out the disputed quotation. With this in his pocket, Frank went to Sangster's and got his skiff—an old-fashioned, high-sided Eton skiff, built by Searle, good in rough water, and which would bear a good-sized

sail in a breeze in the reaches. It was about two o'clock. Frank sculled leisurely down under The Wick shore, as the tide was running up and the slack water was on that side of the river. The stream, running up from Hammersmith, follows the long bend of the Barnes and Mortlake shore, to Kew. He went on at his ease, just keeping his boat's head free of the irregular bank, and making use, from habit, of every little sinuosity of it. So he came by the osiers and the creek. Below the creek was a shallow which ran out some little distance. He rounded this. and then came back again to the bank and the osier-beds. The bank becomes more irregular further down, and opposite Mortlake and Barnes there are, as has been said, many small bays with projecting points of grassy ground terminating them. He had followed a little the bend of one of these, and rounded the projection. He backed water

with his right-hand scull, and gave his left a strong stroke to get the boat's head into the next bay. He shipped his right scull to let his boat slide close by the projection, and so turned into the bay. All of a sudden he felt his boat go bump against another—a blow which almost unseated him. Recovering himself he looked sharply round, and saw that he had run his bows against the side of a boat lying in the little bay. For a moment he saw only a sailor lying in the With his usual ready civility, he boat. said, "Hullo! beg your pardon—didn't see vou."

The figure leaped up, and a harsh voice shouted out, "Now, then, where be you accoming to?" It was the figure of a tall young man in a sailor dress, with a large black beard covering his lower face—Tom.

Frank recognised him in an instant as the Vol. III.

man he had twice seen on the previous day. Tom knew Frank at a glance. Frank had no wish to court an encounter with Tom; but Tom's wish was the reverse. So the former said quietly, "I didn't see your boat."

"You might ha' seed it if you'd looked out," replied the other fiercely. "S'pose you want the whole river to yourself—running agin people's boats."

Frank felt it was a rude speech, but he kept his temper, and said good-humouredly, "Accidents will happen. There's no harm done."

"No harm! You did it o' purpose, and be damned to you!"

Frank knew now that Tom meant mischief; so he shipped his left scull, but sat still. The boats lay touching each other, the stream rather pushing the stern of Tom's boat on to the other. Tom stepped over

the seat towards the stern of his own boat, and Frank seeing this stood up and turned towards him. They were equally tall young men—Frank sinewy and broad-shouldered, Tom the heavier.

"I tell you it was an accident; but if you have anything to say, say it." Frank spoke with quiet composure.

Tom's passion mastered him, and misjudging Frank's quiet manner and mild words thought he was intimidated. He advanced nearer, put one foot over on to the edge of Frank's skiff, and leaning forward, said—

"I got this to say—you're a blasted poaching beggar and a sneak!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when Frank's left hand came like lightning, a straight, telling blow right into Tom's face. For a moment the blow staggered him, and his foot was withdrawn from the skiff; but recovering himself, he leaped forward with a fierce oath and threw himself with all his weight upon the other. As he came Frank drew his right foot back to steady himself, and by good luck it planted itself on an angle of the seat and the side, or the weight of Tom and the force of the rush might have sent them both over the boat's side into the river. The skiff staggered under the concussion. As he came Frank made a snatch with his right hand at Tom's left arm, which was stretched out in the spring, and caught him by the wrist. This broke, in a degree, the force of the man's weight, but with his right arm Tom encircled Frank, and pinned his left arm; and now he tried to force him over the boat side. Finding his left arm useless in the struggle, Tom did all he could to get it loose. He swaved it back, and jerked it out at full length, and tried by sheer strength of muscle to double

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his arm and bend Frank's wrist back. Frank held it as in a vice. The heavier weight of Tom enabled him to force Frank back over the seat, but as he followed over it, Frank suddenly drew him forward, and Tom, making a stumble over the seat, his antagonist gave him a twist, and they both fell in the bottom of the boat, Tom under. All this time Tom had kept up a volley of frightful oaths. Frank never uttered a word. His whole attention was given to what he was about. He felt pretty sure that Tom wanted to force him over the boat-side, and fall over with him and drown him; and this was Tom's real intention. He didn't care if he was drowned himself, if, in his blind rage, he could drown Frank.

When the two men fell Frank's right hand struck against the gunwale, and this for the present stunned it, so that it lost its hold on Tom's wrist. But he felt, now that his adversary was down, he could have kept him there and called for help across the water, for there were men on the Mortlake shore watching the fight. But the spirit of the gentleman was strong in Frank and prevented his doing this. His blood was thoroughly up now, and he felt a certain contempt for this, his burly antagonist, and he determined that he would fight it out fairly, though he knew in his own mind that this was not a mere fight, but a fight for life with a would-be murderer.

When Tom found his left hand free he made a desperate struggle to get up and still hold Frank down. But the latter was too active for this. He wrenched his left arm free, and then jumped to his feet. Leaping over the seat behind him, over which Tom had stumbled, he put himself into an attitude to receive him.

"Now, my man, don't be afraid," he said,

with quiet irony. Tom got to his feet, furious at his failure hitherto. He dashed over the seat with a roar of defiance. Frank's right hand was still half numbed, so he met Tom with the same straight blow in his face as before with his left. But Tom did not want to fight; he only wanted to get hold of his man and force him over the side, so he resorted to the same tactics as before. He bore the blow as well as he could, quite failing to ward it off, and then rushed in on Frank headlong. The right hand of the latter was now unable to hold Tom's left as before, so he determined to try fairly which was the strongest man in a wrestle. So they grappled each other, Tom savagely intent on forcing his man backwards over the side, Frank holding his ground firmly, and watching his opportunity. The length of the struggle and the fall had weakened Tom a little, and so his weight

told less in the fight. He now tried to sway Frank to and fro, got one foot more than once on the edge of the seat behind him, and so forced his man a little back; but in one of these efforts his foot slipped off the seat, it failed to catch any other angle that could steady him, and Frank, finding this, tried to throw him again in the boat; but Tom, in his struggles to save himself from a fall, awkwardly twisted himself half round to the boat side, his footing gave way, and he fell heavily sideways over the seat on to a rowlock, Frank on the top of him. The boat dipped, and they were both nearly over into the river. Frank, in a moment, felt the grasp of his antagonist to relax. One exclamation burst from the lips of Tom, "Dam-nation!" His hands fell loose, and dropped into the water, his long hair was dabbled in it—his back was broken. had fallen on the sharp points of the row-

lock with all his weight and that of Frank, the weak spot at the bottom of the back had received the whole force of the blow, and in an instant he was paralysed. Frank scrambled back into the boat, and then, seeing that something terrible had happened, he leaned forward and raised the dripping head from the water, and with great difficulty got Tom off the smashed rowlock into the skiff. Then he set himself to work to scull the boat across the river to Mortlake. It had drifted out of the little bay and a short distance up stream during the struggle, and was now nearly opposite to Codling's house. While Frank was getting the sculls in the water, and the skiff's head round for Mortlake, he put one hand to his cheek, and sent one ringing cry-"Cod-ling!" across the river.

Codling had been brought out to his door. by his wife looking out of window and calling his attention to the fight under the osiers opposite. The whole affair did not take half the time it has taken to relate it, and so he and his wife were only half realizing what it all meant, and not at all recognizing Frank, when the ringing sound of his name came over the water.

"It's young Mr. Morrice, as I'm alive!" said Mrs. Codling. "He's a-calling of you. There's something dreadful been and happened. Go down, Codling, go down and see what it is."

In a few minutes Codling came running back. "A shutter, here, quick! He've broke his back!"

"Who's broke his back?" said Mrs. Codling. "Not Mr. Morrice, sure? Warn't it him a-rowing?"

"Never you mind who 'tis—give us the shutter." So Codling got the shutter, and in a short time Tom was carried into the house.

"I've got a bed in a back room downstairs," said Codling—"a quiet one."

"That's it," said Frank; "better than carrying him up a steep stair. And now, Codling, have out a fly and pair for Richmond as quick as you can, and send for a doctor."

Tom lay on the bed with his eyes shut, moving only occasionally, and then groaning heavily. The surgeon came and examined him, and then shook his head.

"Are his friends near here?" he said.

"They should come soon—one never knows how long these things may be—there may be internal injuries, besides that of the spine."

Frank told him that he was going for the friends of the young man immediately, and they would be there that evening; and he would leave him in the surgeon's charge. As he was going out he heard Tom mutter

something. He went back, and leaning over him, said, "What is it?"

"Susan," was all the reply.

"I am going for her," said Frank. He gave some directions to Mrs. Codling on his way out, evaded her question as to who the wounded man was, and in a few minutes was on his way to Richmond.

CHAPTER VII.

O^N reaching Richmond, Frank stopped the carriage at the corner of the road near the cottage of Mrs. Print, and, getting out, walked down to it. He was told by Hannah, at the door, that Mrs. Print was at home, and that Susan was out walking with her father. He was glad to hear that Harding was still at Richmond.

Going into the house, Frank found Mrs. Print.

"Why, I declare, it's Mr. Morrice!" And then, seeing he looked very grave, and also pale, and that his whole appearance was a little disordered—for he had not quite recovered from the struggle of life and death with Tom in the boat—she added, "What in the world has been happening to you? You look all to pieces!"

- "Something very serious has taken place, Mrs. Print; and I'm come to see you all about it. Will Harding be in soon?"
- "Something serious! Well, of all the places I was ever in, this beats anything for things happening. Why, my gracious! only yesterday there were I don't know how many things happening, and then here again to-day. It is wonderful!"
- "This is a very serious matter, my dear Mrs. Print."
- "Of course—they are all serious matters. That was a serious matter yesterday when that man in the gardens—Heaven only knows who he was—came talking to Susan and me when you had gone away somewhere, and all just because we were civil to him about the lily and the dyes in the con-

servatory; and I daresay he watched you go away, and then up he comes. We may be thankful we hadn't our pockets picked, in spite of his fine manners, for I've heard that in London some of the very worst of those impostors put on the airs and graces of lords and royal dukes, till you can't tell the difference; and then we are hardly got home, and I'm gone to have a nap after my long walk and my lunch, when here comes another man from I don't know where, and makes such a hullabaloo with his great loud voice as wakes me up and spoils my nap, and makes a noise might be heard at Jericho; though I can't see, for my part, why people will go on talking about Jericho, as if there was such a place, when every child knows that reads its Bible that when the trumpets went marching round it seven times, it all tumbled down, houses and walls and all, in a litter, just like Print's shop when

the book-case fell down and the books were all over the floor."

Just at this juncture Harding and Susan came in. "Here it is again," Mrs. Print went on, "here's more things happening, though what it is I'm sure I don't know, for Mr. Morrice there is looking as glum about something as ever he can be, and won't say what it is."

Frank rose from his chair, and taking Harding by the arm, he said, "Please excuse me and Harding for a minute; I have something to talk to him about." He put out his hand to Susan, who was looking alarmed at the gravity of his manner, and said, "There is nothing to alarm you; we'll come back presently," and so he took Harding off into the next room. Susan remained with her aunt, who poured out a volume of surmises on their "extraordinary proceeding."

Frank related to Harding what had taken place, much to the surprise and concern of that worthy man. In a few plain and hearty words he congratulated Frank on his escape from such a savage outrage, and expressed his disgust and his shame at it from a young man who had been domiciled with his family for so long; and then he asked Frank what he would wish to have done. Frank told him that from the surgeon's manner he expected that Tom would not live long, and that, as he had asked for Susan, perhaps Harding would take her to see him; that as Tom's latter misdeeds had arisen out of his wild passion for Susan, it would be an act of kindness to let him see her before he died—that is, if Susan did not On this Harding called out Susan, object. and Frank went in to tell Mrs. Print some When she came to of the circumstances. understand that there had been a bad accident, and a man was dying, she was quite subdued, and warm in her sympathy; but Frank was afraid to tell her any of the details for fear of an outburst of astonishment and horror, which—as he said afterwards to his father, when relating to him the circumstances of this afternoon—might, and probably would, have begun at the river, gone through York Cathedral, taken a turn round a hospital and two surgeon's premises, then into Newgate, looked in at Mary Queen of Scots in her prison, and finished with the Spanish Armada. All this he escaped by a prudent reticence.

In the course of a short time Harding came to tell him that Susan wished to go. It was then a question what was to be done with Mrs. Print; but she refused point-blank to be left behind when the expedition to Mortlake was spoken of. And so it end-

ed in the fly coming up to the door, and all four of them getting in.

When they arrived at Codling's they were shewn into Mrs. Codling's parlour, where it was proposed to leave Mrs. Print while the others were with Tom. The surgeon came in to say that he was composed, and that he was able to talk connectedly; but that he feared from his condition, probably, when the inflammation set in, that he would wander in his mind. The spine was no doubt seriously injured, and he suspected that there were other parts much damaged; whatever had to be done had better be done quickly. So Harding went in to say that Susan was there.

In a few minutes he returned to say that Tom wished to see Susan and Harding and Frank, all together, and nobody else, as he had something to communicate to them. So they went in. Tom was lying as before on the bed with his dress on. The surgeon had found that it gave him so much pain to undress him, that he had thought it better only to remove some of his clothing. Mrs. Codling had covered him over with some blankets. His face was quite pale, though swollen and discoloured in parts from the blows of Frank. His long hair was still damp and matted as it lay on the pillow.

When the party entered Tom turned his eyes on Susan, and kept them on her face, seeming to see no one else.

- "Thank ye for coming," he said. "I thort maybe ye'd come."
- "Poor Tom!" said Susan softly, and bending over him.
- "I be very bad, Susan." Then, in a moment, he added—"I want to say I warn't kind to ye yesterday. I begs your pardon, Susan, for it."

"No, no, Tom; you were not unkind—you were angry—only angry, Tom."

"That's good in you, Susan, to say that; you was allays good to me." And then presently—"I be very weak, and I ha' something to tell to Mr. Harding and Mr. Morrice. Could ye sit down a bit?"

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So they all three sat down near the bed. It was a piteous sight, this fine powerful frame of the young man, only the day before glorying in its strength, now lying stretched powerless on the bed. There were the handsome head, and thick long hair, and the curling beard, and the massive torso, the large arms and the powerful limbs shining through the coverlet, all so lately abounding in its young vigour, now reduced to impotency. His voice, once so strong and loud, was now low, and scarcely above a whisper. There was, too, a moaning tone in it which touched Susan as she

sat and looked on this wreck of what she had seen only the day before in all its exuberance of health and strength.

"I know I'm a-going to die, Mr. Harding," Tom began, "and so I'd wish to tell ye how 'twas about that other job afore I goes. It were altogether a accident, ye Not but what it were wrong—in may say. coorse it were-but it warn't so bad as ye might think; and I'd not wish for Susan and you and Mr. Morrice here to be athinking wuss o' me arter I were gone nor you might if ye knowed all." After a pause, he went on-"Ye'll mind ye, Mr. Harding, of the day as the barge were alaying by the osiers, and I went up the creek to kill some o' they rats. I hadn't nothing on my mind no more nor a child about doing nothing but they rats when I goes away from the barge. Well, I goes up the creek, and I gets two or three of

'em on my way up; and then I comes down agin, and I gets two or three more. a-coming out to the barge, when I thinks as I'd like to make up a dozen on 'em afore I comes back, and so I waits a bit to let 'em get quiet again down by the mouth o' the creek. Then I goes up agin—it were agrowing darker, and was jist a prime light -and I gets two or three more. I were right a-top o' the creek, where the bit o' wall comes out from the big wall, and I gets a rat there—leastways, I hits him, jist as I did afore, and he jumps down in amongst they rushes. There were a iron pin as were a-laying in the boat, and I catches up this, as I did afore, and I jumps on the bank and hits the rat with it. jist throwed him in the boat, when I heers somebody a-coming along the grass jist beyond the bit o' wall. I knowed as I'd no bisness on the bank, so I gets and hides in

the ditch jest by the path. It were pretty darkish, ye mind, and ye couldn't see anything, not clear. Well, when the man come a-straddling round the end o' the wall, I were took all aback, for there were young Mr. Morrice. In a minnit I were jest as I think the devil hisself come in my head all of a heap. He come round the wall; he jest stopped a bit, and brushed the dirt of the bricks, as I guess, off of him with his hand, and then he looked down at the boat for a moment, and then he come along the path. As he goes by me I could ha' touched him. I steps out behind him, and I gives him one with the pin on the side of his head. I see him fall, and then I never stopped to see no more; and I gets back into the boat, and down the creek as quick as I could. When I gets out in the river I pulls about a bit, throwed the pin overboard, and then I goes back to the barge."

There was a dead silence when Tom ceased speaking, which he had done, not without difficulty, and with many interruptions. Presently he went on again.

"When Susan telled me, two days arterwards, that young Mr. Morrice had been down to the barge, to say as something had happened up there, and I might know about it, it jest took me all of a heap. I made sure as he'd a-had something as he'd be bad for a time, and here he were all right again the next day or so, and a-coming down to fix me. How did he know it were me? He never seed me. It give me a turn—and he coming all the way down hisself to tell about it to Susan. And then it were wus when I seed in the papers about the inquest as there were a man killed jest there as I never seen or heard tell on—never; and I never made it out nohow-not never!"

"But you know now how 'twas, Tom, don't ye?" said Harding.

"No, I don't, Mr. Harding, not right out. How should I know? I haven't seen nobody, and nobody never telled me. I made a guess as it weren't Mr. Morrice as I hit, in coorse—but that young man. I'd a-swored it was him as plain as ever I seed any man in my life, barring it were darkish."

The three persons sitting there looked at each other at this singular confession, and then Frank said to Tom,

"The fact was that poor young Tapps that you hit was very like me—as like as possible—and I have heard since that his dress and mine were very much alike, and this must have misled you in the dusk. He was often mistaken for me about Kew."

Tom raised his hand slowly and with much difficulty, and passed it in a vacant kind of way over his hair, as if he was trying to think over this. "I'd ha' swored it was you, Mr. Morrice—that I would." After a pause he said, "Maybe, then, it warn't you as I met that evening on Strand there nigh Sangster's—jest a day or two afore?"

Frank considered a moment. "I never remember meeting you on the Strand. I saw you at Wilcox's Wharf one day, and once when you passed up on the barge by Chiswick Eyot; but I never saw you again till yesterday, and the day before in London."

"Then they telled me wrong on Strand that day." After this Tom lay quiet for a little while, and then he said, "You won't think bad o' me, Susan, for this?"

"Oh! Tom, I'm sure you are very sorry," she said, stooping over towards him. "You know it was wicked of you; but I am sure you're sorry!"

"I knows that, Susan—I knows it were wrong, and I wish as I'd never done it; but

then, ye see, I were jest mad then—I were
—mad about you, Susan." Frank got up
from his chair, and moved quietly to the
fire-place. "Ye mind I telled ye many
times as I loved ye—and I did—that I did
—I'd ha' done anything for you—anything
—if 'twere ever so bad." Then, presently,
"I'm a-going now—Susan—a-going to die
—and maybe ye'd jest once say as ye knowed I did love you—jest once?"

Susan's eyes had been full of tears all through Tom's confession. His broken voice, his crippled condition, the remembrance of old companionship, the feeling that, lying underneath all the sad story, she was herself, however untentionally, the cause of all this wreck of Tom, affected the young girl. Now, at this appeal to her from the dying man—the same appeal she had resisted the day before, when he was strong and well—she gave way, and her tears ran over.

- "Yes, Tom, I did. I thought so. You were always kind to me."
- "Thank ye, Susan, for saying that. I'm glad ye knowed it. I'm better now I knows it, 'cause then ye 'll be less hard on me for what I've done about that man—and about him."
- "I shall forget about that, Tom; I shall only remember that you were good to me," said Susan, sobbing.
- "In coorse I were—you tried to make me better, allays." Then presently, "D'ye mind when you tried to learn me about going to church along o' you and Mr. Harding on Sundays, and about me reading the Lord's Prayer. Somehow I didn't make much on it. But, Susan, d'ye think now ye'd jest say it over to me. I'd like it, if ye would. I'd like to hear your voice say it through onst; it would mind me o' them times, it would."

Without hesitation Susan quietly kneel-

ed down by the side of the bed. Harding stood up, and Frank was standing by the fireplace. In a voice half broken by her tears Susan repeated the beautiful prayer. As she rose, Tom said,

"Thank ye, Susan, I never knowed it like that afore. It done me good now to hear you say it." Then after a minute, looking at Frank, he said, "It were wrong o' me, Mr. Morrice, I knows that, but I weren't right in my head, I allow—there were that as happened in the park—you didn't know as t'were me ye hit, maybe." Frank gave him a quiet nod of intelligence. "Ah, ye knowed it—that were one thing as cut me, and then there were—" he hesitated and raised one hand, then let it drop,—" may be ye'll forget when I be gone, Mr. Morrice."

Frank had come forward from the fire-

place when Tom addressed him, and stood near the bed again. Now at these last words he leaned forward, and put one hand on Tom's as it lay on the blanket, and said, "We will both forget."

"Both on us forget," Tom repeated. Then he turned his eyes to Susan, "I haven't no more to say; you won't be thinking hard of me, nor yet Mr. Harding, for what I've been telling ye."

"No, no," said Harding, kindly, "it were a accident, Tom, and a mistook; if you be sorry for 't, God'll forgive ye—and I don't allow ye did mean it so bad as to kill him."

"So help me God, I didn't," said Tom with a sudden energy. "I were mad."

Susan had not sat down again. Then Tom looking at her said, "You be a-going Susan; it were good in ye to come, very good—afore

ye go—I shan't never see ye no more—would ye?—jest one?—give me one, only one kiss, and then I'd be happy."

Susan was standing up; she hesitated a moment. Frank was standing behind her, and leaned forward and whispered "Yes." She stooped, put the matted hair back from Tom's forehead, and kissed it.

"Poor Tom!" she murmured as she drew back.

"Bless ye," he said; "thank ye, Susan." He put out his hand toward her; she placed hers on his, gave it a little pressure, and went out.

Harding went out with her. Tom lay for a little time with his eyes shut, and then he muttered something about Susan, and then about Africa. He was beginning to wander, being rather exhausted with the long and trying interview with Susan, and with his confession. Frank was about to ask if the

surgeon was in the house, when the door opened and that person walked in. Frank told him of Tom beginning to wander in his talk.

"As I expected," said the surgeon. "I have been back here a little time, but would not interrupt you. It has excited and tired him. Now he must be kept quiet."

So Frank went out, and the surgeon said he would remain for a time and watch him. Frank found the party in the other room—Mrs. Print for once a little subdued, and crying, out of sympathy for Susan. The two had some tea, which Mrs. Codling recommended, and which is a panacea for a great many troubles. And then it was arranged that Mrs. Print and Susan should return home in the fly to Richmond, and Harding remain for the night with Tom. So they went.

After a time the surgeon came out, to say Vol. III.

that his patient was very restless and wandered a good deal, and he feared a bad night was before him; he wouldn't answer for anything. Had the young man any affairs to settle? In the course of conversation it came out who Tom was; and then the surgeon said he remembered the inquest, and he added, without any unkindness of meaning in his voice or manner, that the best thing that could happen to the young man would be to die, which he was pretty certain to do.

By this time the day was going down, and Frank told Harding he would go home, as his father would be expecting him, and he would come again in the morning. So Frank went home. But before he went he wrote a note to the clergyman of Mortlake and gave it to Harding. In this he confided to the clergyman—whom he knew—as he had done to the surgeon, who Tom was,

and requested him to come and see him; and he believed Tom was very sorry for his misdeeds.

It was arranged that if Tom should become alarmingly worse during the night Frank was to be sent for.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT evening Frank related to his father all that had taken place during the afternoon. The elder Morrice listened to the tale with mingled feelings. When his son began the account of the fight he inwardly reproached himself with having in a manner helped to bring this on him by his message to Barnes. As he went on with it—for he interrupted Frank often by questions, particularly at the commencement, as he wished to know with precision how the quarrel had commenced—his father went into the struggle with a full understanding of it and its details, and of the result intended by Tom. He threw up

his hands with an expression of horror when the final fall came, and the terrible consequence.

"My God! Frank, it might have been your case. He was a resolute fellow though he wouldn't fight, and it was a toss-up which went over first—eh?"

"Very nearly, Dad. Luckily I had better wind, and he was a little blown with the first round. Besides, he had thrown himself away by his noise and his passion, while of course I was cooler; and I don't suppose the poor devil knew anything whatever of wrestling. But the worst of it was, the skiff was so unsteady; it swayed about under us as if it had been made of paper. More than once I expected we should have been both of us in the water; and if we had, my firm belief is he would have tried to drown me and himself too."

"An awful fellow," said Mr. Morrice.

"I'm truly grateful to God for your escape."

Then Frank related his trip to Richmond; and Tom's confession; and his behaviour; and Susan's. All this latter he passed over very shortly.

"Anyhow, he seems to have come to his senses at last," observed the elder man, "but what a horrible situation for a young man like that to be in! If he should recover, there is a trial for murder hanging over him. They might commute his punishment to transportation, or a long imprisonment under the circumstances, though he certainly killed poor young Tapps, and struck him in a cowardly way in the dusk, with a savage instrument, on a fatal place. If he recovers, and gets a long imprisonment for his punishment, of course this story will rouse up the women and the humanitarians to a grand effort for his release on a ticket-of-leave, as a good boy; and then I sincerely hope, when he is out, if he must fall in love with somebody, that he will select a daughter of one of the earnest humanitarians, and keep clear of The Wick."

"It would be a curious sequel," said Frank, "if the young lady should be the fiancée of a brother humanitarian, and Tom should drown him for presuming to like her. But the doctor expects he will die."

"If he lives and becomes a ticket-of-leave," said Mr. Morrice, "a man of such violent passions quite ungoverned, and with not too much brains evidently, will be sure to give trouble, though he is penitent now. The only one redeeming point about him is his liking for that young person; and that, you see, good in itself of course, has had the effect of leading him into all these troubles by its fierce action on a foolish mind."

"He was a splendid wreck as he lay there," said Frank, "and I couldn't help feeling for him, though he had done his best to drown me only a few hours before."

- "Is your hand much damaged, Frank—anything broken? I hope not."
- "No, nothing broken. In the fall it struck the side of the rowlock and bruised the wrist—numbed it for a moment."
- "By-the-way, do you remember my warning you about this fellow, that night after you hit him in the park about the walnuts, and you heard him threatening you for it down by the fir-clump?"
 - "I do, well," said Frank.
- "That looks like a vindictive fellow; he nursed that for months, you see. And then something else coming on the top of that—eh, Mr. Frank?—made him a wild beast nearly. Of course it was no fault of hers that such a tiger of a fellow fell in love with her, for she's a good, honest, and amiable girl, I'm sure, as can be, and as pretty as she is hon-

est; but it was a narrow escape for you. What are you going to do about him further? I suppose he must stay over there at Codling's for the present."

So Frank told his father of the arrangement about Harding; which he approved of, adding, "Of course we must pay all expenses." They sat up talking over various things till late, expecting every hour that a messenger would come from Mortlake. But none came. So they separated for the night.

On the following morning Parkins came into Frank's room, as usual, and after fidgetting about a little more than common, he gave a little cough. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Frank, there's bad news come from Mortlake—the young man's dead."

"How do you know that?" said Frank, starting up in bed.

"A man came over with a note an hour

ago," said Parkins, "and he said the young man was dead."

Frank read the note. It was from the surgeon, to say that Tom had been very restless and in great pain up to twelve; then he was quiet for an hour or two, and slept a little; and then he woke up and convulsions came on, and he was dead at four o'clock. As he was evidently dying, and knew no one, he and Harding considered it of no use to send and disturb him for no The surgeon said he could make purpose. no examination of the injuries to the body until he had the permission of the relatives of the deceased; but "he believed that the lower dorsal portion of the spinal cord had been seriously injured, and palsy of the lower extremities had resulted therefrom; and, moreover, that there were, he suspected, severe internal ruptures."

When Frank met his father, and showed

him the surgeon's note, they agreed that under all the circumstances it was not to be regretted that the affair should so terminate and Tom die now, instead of recovering to only a miserable existence for a painful and limited period, and with a terrible uncertainty overhanging him.

Poor Tom! It seemed that here was a fine young man dying in the very zenith of his health and strength, and nobody regretting him—save one. When Susan had kissed his forehead on that afternoon and had said the two words—"Poor Tom!" that was the only real sympathizing sentiment breathed over his fate; except a kindly regret from Harding. "Poor Tom!" That was his Requiem.

Frank went down to Mortlake, and found Harding at Codling's. Tom lay on his bed as he had died, the face composed, though still discoloured, in parts, from the blows of Frank's hand. Harding had little new to relate, different from what was contained in the surgeon's note, as to the last hours of Tom. He had not spoken to Harding connectedly from the time of Frank leaving the house; and he had died quietly at the last, but without recognizing any one. The clergyman had come and had seen him, but Tom wandered and could not understand him.

In the course of the day Harding went down to Southwark, and saw Mr. Charles, and related what had occurred. "The 'Columbine,'" Mr. Charles said, "could stay at Richmond, as she was empty, for two or three days, till the funeral was over, and then he could bring her down again." The worthy merchant was painfully concerned at Tom's last act, and the manner of his death. From Southwark Harding went on to Green-

wich, and saw the uncle of Tom. He shortly said he was not surprised at what had happend; but would attend the funeral if Harding would arrange it.

Frank went to Richmond and saw Mrs. Print and Susan, and communicated the details of Tom's death. Susan thought over the early days of her companionship on board the barge with Tom, and gave him all she could—her tribute of pity—her tears. Mrs. Print abounded in tears too; but they were more out of a natural tendency to an overflow of pity on occasions, if those around her were unhappy, or were affected by anything which touched the sympathetic nerve, than tears of any sorrow or even regret on her part. And therefore they did not dam up the stream of her reminiscences in connexion with, and out of connexion with, the immediate event before her. With tears in

her eyes, and blowing her nose repeatedly, she declared "that she really began to think she must leave Richmond, for every day lately her life was a torment to her, and that she shouldn't feel the least sure that any day another murderer might walk into her house and kill both her and Susan in a minute; and that it seemed to her as if fighting was going on all round her; and this fighting in boats was just what she remembered reading of the landing in England of Julius Cæsar and William the Conqueror, and she supposed this was the kind of thing that the Trojans and Grecians did. about which Print was so fond of spouting in the garden before breakfast, with his arms under his coat-tails."

Frank soothed her as well as he could, and got away home to The Wick. He had proposed to Harding that he should bear all the expenses of the funeral of Tom; but this Harding would not hear of. The uncle had at once declined to have anything to do with them; but Harding said that Tom, with all his faults, was the son of his old mate, Abraham Plank, and he had promised him to look after him while alive, and now he would do the last thing he could by him, and bury Tom as decently as he could. So Frank did not combat this. They agreed that he should be buried quietly at Mortlake.

In three days more Tom was quietly laid one morning in his grave in the churchyard of Mortlake. No one came to his funeral but the uncle from Greenwich, and Harding and Frank. The two former walked side by side, and Frank followed them, and saw the coffin lowered into its decent resting-place.

There was a simple headstone at the grave, after a time, with the name—"Thomas Plank," and dates of his birth and death. There was nothing else—no inscription—at first. But some time afterwards there appeared one day—nobody seemed to know precisely how or precisely when—on the white face of the stone, cut deep into it, the two words—

"Poor Tom."

They were more eloquent than would have been a quotation from Scripture, for they spoke to every heart. Most people read a tombstone inscription with but little sympathy. But no one in passing could read these two words without a feeling of pity involuntarily rising and accompanying the words. They were the requiem of Tom; and in after-years a female form might be seen in front of the stone now and

then, and a kind voice heard giving directions that the stone should be kept clean, and the words distinct.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was on an afternoon, a few days after the events recorded in the last chapter, that Mr. and Mrs. Codling were sitting in their parlour at Mortlake. The windows looked over the towing path to the river and the osiers beyond.

"I can't at all cipher that fighting atwixt them two young men, Codling, and one on 'em young Mr. Morrice. It passes me." Mrs. Codling was sitting in the window at work with her needle, and her husband was taking a pipe by the fire, a cold easterly March wind blowing.

- "Humph," muttered Codling.
- "Well, you may say 'Humph,' but that don't tell me nothing."

Codling went on smoking complacently, and then he said, "It seemed to me pretty plain, missus."

- "You ain't much above mighty civil this morning, that I will say," retorted Mrs. Codling. "I don't see where it was so plain as if 'twas wrote up as high as the church, I don't."
- "Why, surely, missus, you see that young woman as come here that night o' the fight?"
- "And if I did—what then?" said Mrs. Codling; "warn't she the daughter o' that Harding that goes up and down here with the barge?"
- "Very well," poo-oof went Codling's smoke.
 - "And that other was the sister o' Hard-

ing; she telled me that while the t'others was in with the young man. And she telled me, too, that that Tom was aboard the barge with Harding and this daughter, though she was so dressed up all above herself—s'pose that was the sister's doing of—and that Tom had been a sweethearting after her, and that was why they'd a-come from Richmond to see him, and for old acquaintance."

"Didn't she say nothing else?" said Codling, between the puffs of smoke.

"No, she didn't, not pertikler, except it was terrible these young men a-fighting this way, and she thought she'd never get over the fright it give her."

Just then, Humpy, the fat baker, came by the window, and Mrs. Codling, opening it, called out, "Morning, Mr. Humpy, going for a walk? Here's my husband a-having a pipe. Won't you come in and have one along with him?"

Humpy thanked Mrs. Codling, and said he would; so he turned into the house, and entered the room. He was in his usual dress, his neck all open, a loose light jacket and baggy trousers. His huge cheeks fell out over his shirt-collar, and his little eyes twinkled. He now staggered into the parlour, his enormous bulk filling up the doorway; and taking a chair by the table, he said, in his accustomed husky voice and rather mournful manner, "I bain't not so light as I were, Mrs. Codling, and so I'll take a cheer, and thank you. I was a going to take a walk, but my feet is very bad, and I tells mother so this morning."

"There's a pipe, Mr. Humpy, and here's the 'baccy," said Codling, "'tis first-rate; young Mr. Morrice give it me; he said it's Turkey."

"I'd take a pipe, anyhow, Mr. Codling,

and I shan't like it no worse if it come from The Wick."

- "I didn't say as it come from The Wick
 —I said as young Mr. Morrice said it's
 Turkey."
- "How short you be this morning, Codling!" said his wife—"that be the second time as you've been short this morning."
- "Well, Sally, it mayn't ha' been at The Wick at all, but it——"
- "Now don't you be a-Sally-ing o' me when you be so short! I won't have no Sallys, nor nothing o' that sort, while you cuts me down like you've been a-doing all this morning."

Codling smoked submissively.

"We was jest a-talking, Codling and me, about that fighting o' they two young men t'other day, Mr. Humpy, and I was a-saying I can't cipher it. Now, Codling, you hold your tongue."

Humpy smoked in silence. Presently he said—"I seed the fight from my door. I were a-standing at my door, and I says to mother, says I, 'They'll both on 'em be in the water in a minnit a-fighting in that boat—'tain't much of a place to fight in,' says I; and afore I'd a-said it a'most, down they go, and one on 'em in the water and t'other nigh over him."

"What was it all about, Mr. Humpy?—that's where I'm in a non-plush," said Mrs. Codling.

"That's jest what I've been a-saying to mother. I says to mother, 'There must be something as'll make two young men, and one of 'em a gentleman, go fighting in that sort of a way, for all the world as them two game uns in our back yard.' Mother, she lets me have a game un or two."

"How do you know," said Codling to his wife, at the same time knocking the ashes

out of his pipe in a measured way, "as him over there"—jerking his hand towards the window and The Wick—"hadn't cast a sheep's-eye at that young woman?"

Humpy smoked. Codling filled a fresh pipe of tobacco. Mrs. Codling laid her work down on her lap, and exclaimed, "Lor!"

Poo-oof—Codling's smoke curled slowly upwards.

"Well, if ever I did!" continued Mrs. Codling—"what these young men is always a-doing of! Why, that must ha' come of the barge going up and down past The Wick. What a young hussy!"

"There you go, missus," said Codling.
"Why be you throwing dirty water at that
young woman? Perhaps she don't deserve
it."

"There you are again, Codling; you must ha' got out o' bed this morning wrong

leg foremost. If she hadn't been in fault, why should they be fighting? What do you think, Mr. Humpy?"

"I tell ye what I thinks, Mistress Codling," said Humpy, speaking slowly, and laying his pipe on the table before him quietly; "there ain't no baking without firing—that's what I says to mother when I sees our game uns has a turn-up in the back yard. There's the baking—what's the firing? There must be firing somewheres, you see, Mistress Codling."

"Ay—what's the firing?" said Codling, shutting one eye, and looking at his wife in an aggravating way.

"I was a-walking along the tow yester-day," said Humpy, "and I says to mother afore I comes out, says I, when young Mr. Morrice he come in arter the funeral t'other day to ask me how I were, because I've been a-bed, you see, Mrs. Codling, with my

legs, they was so bad, and I says how many captains——"

"He come in after the funeral to pay you a visit, did he?" said Mrs. Codling, interrupting the baker. "That was jest like him—he have such a kind heart—though he do like riding they wicked horses, Monkey and t'other, as is enough to kick anybody's brains out, and I'm always counting there'll be something bad 'll come of it some day; and I'm bound it wasn't his fault as this fighting come about. I'd lay down my life it were a accident for him."

"Now that's jest the way with you women," said Codling. "You're hard on this young woman afore you knows a morsel about it, and you haven't never a word to say agin the other side—they may do jest as suits 'em."

"That's very well for you, Codling, to turn it that way; but you know pretty much how you're always a-excusing the women, whatsever they do. That's your way—all of you—you're all alike—if a woman has a pretty face, there she may do as she likes, and when she likes—it's all the same to you men. Why, there was that young woman—a nasty slut!—down at Barnes at the pastry-cook's, whatever you could see in that girl to call her 'ansom, I never could make out—not I, never; but that's the way with you men!"

"I didn't say ever as she was handsome, not I-what I said was she was a good girl."

"Good, indeed! Ah! I daresay, with your goodness! I know what that means! A grinning creature, with her red face, always showing her teeth because she thought they were white; but they weren't right, I can tell you, for she used to have the dreadfullest toothaches, and you know pretty well what that means."

- "Poor girl!" said Codling, kindly. "She was very ill-used."
- "Get away with your poor girl! I haven't no patience with your pitying her, and she with a face as red as brickdust!"

Codling drew a long breath, and sent the smoke slowly up in a column.

- "What say you, Mr. Humpy—you knowed the young woman?"
- "Yes," said the baker. "I see her ofttimes. I likes 'em myself, I do, to come out with plenty o' colour on 'em. I don't take to mealy ones. Theys like taturs—mealy ones has mealy ones. I favors 'em coloured."
- "My father was a 'ansome man," said Mrs. Codling. "He had a fine colour, hadn't he, Codling?"
- "Yes—poof—he were reddish about the gills." Codling was not warm in his praise.
- "Your mother warn't mealy," said the baker to Mrs. Codling. "I'd lay a couple

o' captains she warn't. You didn't come o' mealy ones."

Mrs. Codling bridled at this indirect compliment, and then said, "My sister Tapps was better looking nor me, mother used to say."

"I don't give in to that," said the baker; there be aberninties and there be muffins; and I ain't a-going to give in as any mother can make 'em what they likes, permiscuous."

"Which of they two is Mrs. Codling?" said her husband, giving a long puff from his pipe.

The baker took the pipe solemnly from his mouth and laid it on the table, and then he said, "Muffins is things as is short—if they ain't eat up sudden they goes off; aberninties is an inwention of a master-baker, and they holds on ever so long—Mistress Codling is one o' the holders on."

Under these accumulated praises Mrs.

Codling blushed; and there was a pause for a minute. Then Mrs. Codling, looking out of window, said,

"Why don't you marry, Mr. Humpy, and make yourself comfortable with a wife?"

"Marry!" exclaimed Codling; "what should Humpy marry for?"

"There ain't no call to fault what Mistress Codling have said," observed the baker, mournfully; "Mrs. Codling likes things reg'lar, and I likes things reg'lar myself, and mother, t'other day, she says to me, 'William,' says she, 'you should marry—you be a-getting on—whatever will become o' you when I be gone?' And I says to mother, 'Marrying in coorse is reg'lar for some, but it ain't reg'lar for other some. Now here be I a eightpenny, and, in corse o' natur, being, you see, in the baking line, I might have a baker's board full, and that 'ud be thirteen eightpennies, and whatever

should I do to feed 'em, Mrs. Codling?"

"Can't see your way by no means," said Codling.

"But you ain't obligated to have thirteen," said Mrs. Codling—"all bakers don't have thirteen children."

"May be not, Mrs. Codling; but in corse o' natur it may be the fortin' o' things for me. Now some o' they young women they be fond disposed in their minds, and if I were a-coming out o' that church door with a young woman by my side as was one o' they fond disposed ones—and the more fonder she were the more it 'ud be in the corse o' natur—there I'd be a-walking along a-prospecting to myself they thirteen eightpennies; and, d'ye see, Mrs. Codling, I'm heavy as it is, and that prospect 'ud be jest like a whole week's make up o' dough right a-top o' me—it wouldn't be reg'lar, d'ye see, Mrs. Codling." And the baker gave a deep

sigh, as if he were suffering from the load which weighed upon his mind.

"That's right," said Codling; "look afore you leap, Humpy."

"By your leave, Mr. Codling," said the baker, with a gasp, "there bain't much o' leaping in me, nor haven't been since the time o' nussing; and I likes to be reg'lar, 'cause my feet weren't never much given to leaping."

After a pause, Mrs. Codling said, "I'm a-thinking, Mr. Humpy, about that funeral. It was rather queer as no one besides that uncle, no relation come to it; 'cause young Mr. Morrice and Harding, they wasn't relations, neither of 'em. Hadn't the young man no mother, and no sisters, nor no-body?"

"Ye see, Mrs. Codling, tain't every one as has sisters and mothers; in coorse he had a mother onst, and she be dead maybe; but he mayn't ha had sisters never. I haven't no sisters, not to speak on, ye may say, as you and Mrs. Tapps; but mother says to me one day, says she, 'William, when I were a-prospecting you a-coming I made sure as I were a-going to have ever so many at onst, and I naterally counted,' says she, 'there'd be gals among 'em, and so I give 'em their names already, and,' says mother, 'there was Jane for one, and Marianne for t'other. I made sure,' says she, 'o' two gals leastways, and when you come, there was you and the two gals all lumped up into one.'"

"Lors, Mr. Humpy!" exclaimed Mrs. Codling.

"And that's why I be so heavy," continued the baker mournfully. "Ye see, I be William, and they two sisters allays agoing about, and that's what I says to mother, when she talks to me o' marrying; says I, 'S'posing as the young woman as is

fond disposed toward me she warn't disposed toward Jane and Marianne, it wouldn't be as pleasant as should be; a young woman when she holds on to me dewoted, ye may say, she don't naterally hold on dewoted to Jane and Marianne likewise, d'ye see, Mrs. Codling?"

"Whatever are you a-talking of, Mr. Humpy? Tain't sense," said Mrs. Codling, giving the piece of work in her hand a flourish.

"Tis a curous way o' things, I do allow," continued the baker, with a deep sigh and imperturbable countenance, "but it counts for a sight o' things; there's when I be assitting a-top o' that willer root on the tow in the summer evenings a-filling my mind with they nightandgales. Well, I be agoing on in my head about baking—about veal pies, and captains, and muffins, and other uns, and there be some one in me a-

going on with they nightandgales a-chirping and a-singing beautiful; that be Marianne. And then there be another is a-working the river and the barges, and that be Jane; she be terrible fond o' barges and the sailors aboard, be Jane."

- "O Lord!" exclaimed Codling, laughing out.
- "Tain't no larfing matter, by your leave, Mr. Codling," said the baker sadly; "if you'd ha' got to carry two sisters about allays along the tow, and they stones in your shoes which warn't made o' pancakes, you'd find as it warn't anything to larf at."
- "Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Codling.

 "I never heerd in all my life of a man having, ye may say, two sisters inside his waistband along with him. Tain't nateral, Mr. Humpy."
 - "There be curous things in nater, Mrs.

Codling," said the baker, giving his pipe a knock on his chair to shake out the ashes, "as I've heerd; there be that gal as were born with two heads t'other day; that warn't reg'lar—most people contents theirselves wi' one; and there was they two boys as come from somewheres, with a waistband a-holding of 'em together—that warn't reglar neether; and so, d'ye see, mother mayn't be so far wrong when she says as Jane and Marianne and me is all on us done up into one promiscuous, like a roly-poly."

This position, backed in a manner by authorities, which the baker had taken up, was rather difficult to dispose of, so Codling tried to turn it. "Ay, but supposing one of your sisters was to die, where'd you be then, Humpy?"

"I've a-counted over that many a time," said the baker, leaning his head on his hand with his elbow on the table; 'and 'tis

a plaguy thing, Mr. Codling, when a man is a-laying awake at night in the dark aworriting hisself about his two sisters as to whether they be bad in their innards or no; and I says so to mother one morning, says I, 'What be I to do in case Jane or Marianne should be took ill?" and says mother, 'William,' says she, 'you must keep 'em up.'"

"Right," said Codling, "plenty of steaks and double X. I've some rare beer, just suit your case. Mrs. Humpy's a sensible woman."

"Naturally she'd know what was good for her gals," said the baker; "and 'tis easy for you, Mr. Codling, to say steaks and beer; but, d'ye see, Jane, she have a considerable turn for pork, and Marianne she can't abide pigs; and when I meets a pig out upon the tow, I'm drawn up and down terrible by Jane a-wanting of him all manner, and Mari-

anne a-racketing about cruel; so 'tain't easy to please gals, d'ye see, Mr. Codling, as you'd find if you had two sisters a-working at you, convenient or unconvenient."

"The Lord ha' mercy upon us!" exclaimed Codling, throwing himself back in his chair.

"Did you ever ask a doctor about this, Mr. Humpy?" said Mrs. Codling; "it does seem so very strange—quite onnatural."

"No, I haven't a-done that, 'cause mother says as I were to keep 'em up, and doctors in general is for keeping folks down; but t'other day when my legs was so bad our doctor he give me something for 'em, and, ye see, Jane she had one half on it and Marianne had the t'other half, and William, that's me, worn't no better for 't, but maybe they was."

"Suppose one of 'em died," said Codling, returning to his former question, "how would you bury her? You'd have to put on mourning, Humpy."

"Tis a curious thing," said the baker; "but laying awake o' night worriting over these gals and keeping of 'em up and either of 'em dying, it somehow makes funerals come up right afore me."

"Funerals!" said Codling, "what kind of a funeral should you have, Humpy?—what should you bury?"

"What I was a-saying, Mr. Codling, was as funerals comes up afore me," said the baker sighing; "and when that young man's coffin went along the tow t'other day, and young Mr. Morrice with it, I were standing at my door along o' mother, and there were Jane and Marianne a-tearing and a-frenzying about to go arter that young man in his coffin. Ye see, Mistress Codling, as it's all reg'lar for gals to be keeping company wi' young men as is young men, and is fresh and

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is living, but 'tis a curous thing for two gals as is, ye may say, respectable sitwated to be a-running arter one as is mouldy and can't marry neither on 'em."

"How would you have dressed 'em, Humpy?" said Codling, giving his pipe a turn in his mouth in the direction of his wife; "couldn't let 'em run all down the tow with nothing on, could you?"

"Codling, I am ashamed of you," said his wife, "I'm down-right ashamed of you—saying such things, and afore Mr. Humpy too. Where did you learn your manners?" Then turning to the baker, "But how do you know that they want to go after that young man—perhaps t'was young Mr. Morrice."

The baker gave a gasp. "I 'aven't to begin larning now, Mistress Codling, what it is the gals wants. I heers 'em plain enough. Why, t'other night I were a-bed and a-worriting, and then I heers Jane a-going on saying as

plain as ever could be—beer, she says, beer; and so I thinks she wants keeping up, and I gets out o' bed and 'as some beer for her; and I were hardly in bed again, and then Marianne she begins, and there she goes on—collops, saysshe, collops; but, d'ye see, collops ain't to be drawed easy like beer; but, Lor, if she didn't keep on till mother was obligated to get up and do her some collops, jest to keep her up."

"Tell ye what, Humpy," said Codling, sending up a tremendous cloud, "the next time you has supper along with your two sisters, just please to inwite me. Collops and beer about bed-time or so keep a man up wonderful."

"You don't want any keeping up, I'm pretty certain," said Mrs. Codling. "I'm sure I'm kep' up often enough as it is with your suppers and your Welsh rabbits and your bottoms o' brandy. Whoever else wants

keeping up, 'tain't you; and so I don't want him, Mr. Humpy, to be going out eating collops with you and any young women at night; though I'm sure I can't make out about your young women—where they is—'tis altogether to me a downright puzzle."

The baker shook his head in a rueful manner. "I don't know much about wearing o' mourning, as Mr. Codling said, but times when I'm a-worriting, I'd a'most be 'appy if they'd both go along wi' the next young man as is carried in his coffin past my door; though they is respectable sitiwated, it'd be a blessing if they was gone; and then I'd not be so heavy a-walking along they plaguy stones on the tow."

"My sakes!" said Mrs. Codling, laughing, "why, that would ha' been a funny sort of a family funeral, Mr. Humpy!" At which the baker shook his head sadly in silence. "Anyhow," Mrs. Codling went on, "it was

very good of young Mr. Morrice to walk after that young man to his grave."

Codling smoked. "Now there's one of 'em gone," he said quietly, "there's t'other has it all to hisself."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Mrs. Codling. "What! after his going to the funeral along with her father, and his walking along with him like anybody else, and taking so much trouble about it all as he did, and paying all the expense at this house, it wouldn't be what he could do, I'm sure, to go to harm that young woman; if he do, then it'll be her fault every bit."

"When a young man, and he's a young gentleman besides, and he goes fighting about a young woman—well, what's the English o' that?" And Codling sent up a tremendous volume of smoke.

Humpy, considering himself appealed to, coughed, and shook his head.

"He's a honourable gentleman as ever lived," said Mrs. Codling, warmly. "I'd go bail for him anywhere."

"In corse you would," said Codling, sneeringly; "that's the way with you women for any man."

"There you're out, Codling. I wouldn't go bail for you, not if 'twas ever so; you might go to jail for me."

At this Codling chuckled in an irritating way. "Why, you don't suppose he'd marry her, do you? Come now."

"Marry her!" Mrs. Codling was taken aback by this unexpected challenge. But she had gone too far to recede in her support of Frank, so she dashed at it. "Yes, I do, then. I think Mr. Morrice is a gentleman born, and I'd never believe that, after going to the funeral of the young man along with the young woman's father, as he'd go to behave bad to her—now then,

that I don't—there now!" She said this defiantly.

"Lord bless your heart and soul!" said Codling—"well, you are a-going of it now!"

"Very well—you wait and see. You never do think of gentlefolks as you ought to think—never. What do you say, Mr. Humpy?"

The baker took his pipe out of his mouth, as if he would deliver himself of an important opinion. "There ain't no saying, Mrs. Codling, what they upper crusts'll do. Ye see there's upper crusty ones and there's crummy ones, and they first uns has color in 'em and these after uns haven't none—they's mealy ones. Now they crusty ones is, ye may say, eightpennies—not like me, d'ye see—and they crummy ones is tuppennies; and 'tain't in nater as eightpennies 'ud go along wi' tuppennies—'tain't reg'lar, d'ye see."

"You're right there," said Codling—"I'm o' your mind, Humpy."

"There you go again, Codling. Mind, indeed! What have you men got to call a mind above what comes out o' they pipes, I'd like to know! And pretty sorts o' minds you do get out o' your pipes!"

"They eightpennies ain't allays crusty ones," said the baker, shifting his position to suit Mrs. Codling. "Times they is, and times they isn't—'tis according."

"Lor, how I do hate all they half-and-half ways!" exclaimed Mrs. Codling, rejecting the halting aid of Humpy. "What I say is, do it and have done wi' it, and don't go a shilly-shallying about it, like a babby over his physic. That's jest what you men do—you go shilly-shallying over a thing—whether you will or whether you won't—and then the young women they gets into trouble. They don't go offing and onning in that sort

of a way—that ain't our way. Now, I'd lay tuppence, if young Mr. Morrice likes that young woman, he'll behave honorable. sure of it. Why, when he was here t'other day about the funeral, didn't he look as like our poor Bob as ever he could be, and warn't that enough to tell me he'd behave honorable? Bob was a honorable young feller as ever could be. You could see it in his face, and so you can in Mr. Morrice's. I don't care a ha'porth o' nuts for what Codling says, not I. Jest let him go up to The Wick, and ask old Mr. Morrice if his son's a-going to be a gentleman or no, and he'd pretty soon find which side the door he'd best be, I'd warrant."

"Humph!" grunted Codling.

"Ah! you may humph with your humphs as long as you like, but you ain't a-going to outface me as to this! Why, Lor, when I've a-been up at The Wick, to see the way

as they does everything there, with their cooks, and their butlers, and their coachmen, and their carriages and horses, and their pictures, and their silver and gold, and their grand rooms and all. Why, you ain't going to persuade me as gentlemen as lives in that grand way is going to behave theirselves jest like these here potboys and baker's boys—no offence to you, Mr. Humpy—as runs arter the hussies and then drops 'em—you ain't a-going to do that."

There was a pause after this outburst. Codling smoked, and did not make any move to take up the glove which Mrs. Codling had thrown down. Presently the baker laid down his pipe, and in a husky voice took up the challenge.

"S'posing you puts it this way, Mrs. Codling. You and Codling be fourpennies; well, s'posing as you hadn't had so many as we in the baking time, not thirteen—but drawing it mild at six—there you have a dorter among 'em, a Jane, or a Marianne—and naterally your father having color, and you a long ways from mealy, she'd be a beautiful gal as ever you clapped eyes on; and s'posing as him as runs o' errans down at the 'Chequers' was to say to you, 'Mistress Codling, your dorter is a beautiful gal and a fond disposed one, and she've color, and I'd make my pints and my quarterns shine like silver but I'd give 'em all to marry your dorter,'—what'd you and Mr. Codling say?"

While Humpy was making this address Mrs. Codling flushed up at the possible picture of her being the mother of this beautiful daughter and five sons; and so, when the baker finished with asking her if she would marry this paragon to the potboy of the "Chequers," the question found her you. III.

mind in a lofty condition of pride and grandeur.

"You must be total mad, Mr. Humpy," she exclaimed, "to think of sich a thing!"

"O Lord!" said Codling, in a provoking tone, as a cloud of smoke went up towards the ceiling.

"Ye see," said the baker, sighing heavily, "things ain't reg'lar, Mrs. Codling, as I tells mother. Ye see, there's weal pies and there's oatmeals—your dorter, she'd be a be-utiful wealer, and him at Chequers he'd be a oatmealer; and so maybe over at Wick, Mrs. Codling, they're wealers."

"Humpy, you're a good un," said Codling—"fill your pipe again."

"Never you mind about your pies and no trumpery cakes, Mr. Humpy," said ing; "besides, it ain't according. ere's women, and there's men; as marries, and there's women

as marries: and there's a woman as is only small beer, and there's a man as is a-top of the tree, and he marries her-well, it don't hurt him not a ha'porth o' cheese. Lots of they ladies as is up there a-holding up their heads as high as you please, they're only small beer; but a lord, he's a bit soft, maybe, and he says—you're a slap-up one, every inch of ye, and you be my wife; and he behaves honorable, and he marries her right out and it don't sinify to him not a spoonful o' mustard. But jest argufy this t'other way, and then see how it'd be; for there ain't no ladies as go marrying Codlings and Humpys-begging your pardon, Mr. Humpy -and Chequerses-not they; they'd be right down hocussed-pocussed and backparloured in no time; and so, you see, it ain't according, and all you said about veal pies and oat-cakes goes for nothing, Mr. Humpy."

"You're right for once," said Codling; "there is a differ. But you'll see about him over there. He's a upper crusty one, I'd be on my oath."

"Tis enough to make one crusty or crummy, or anything else, to hear men talk as you and Mr. Humpy do, a-trying to run down the gentlefolks, and make 'em out to be no better than small people as live about anyhow, a-grubbing and a-grumbling from morning till night. If they was, how do you s'pose all the beautiful books is wrote, full of pictures of women as is angels and good people, and books as tell us all how we should behave ourselves honest, and be good wives—a pretty deal too good for some people I could name—and books for learning the little children in the schools to be right in their minds—if they was all so bad, how could this be going on like their A, B, C? Don't go to tell me, Codling'ansom is as 'ansom does; and I'm certain sure you haven't no call to say, from what goes on in this house, as gentlemen ain't gentlemen. Why, don't it stand to reason? Here we be, ain't we, in this house better and more mannerly than they as goes about living from hand to mouth, begging and jest anyhow-ing for bread to eat, picking and stealing?"

"I don't say but what it's true, missus," said Codling. "Mr. Morrice is always a gentleman in my house, and he pays for everything reglar."

"Then why do you go trying to make out as he ain't a gentleman, and to take away his good name? A gentleman have got a good name to keep up as well as another, and Mr. Humpy knows it as well as I do."

"That's jest what I was saying to mother, as Mr. Morrice he were a game sort, like

they in our back-yard, to go for to come here from Wick o' purpose to go arter the coffin o' that young man as had knocked him about in the boat and done all as ever he could to drownd him, as anybody might see from my door, where mother and I was a-standing and see the fight a-going on."

- "That's but friendly in you, Mr. Humpy, to speak up for him a bit, seeing as he've been to see you more nor once with your bad feet."
- "How you women do take on!" said Codling.
- "I don't pay you none of my compliments to-day, Codling, you may rely, for you've a-done nothing all this blessed day but catch me up short. I wonder where you allow you'll go to one of these days, a-taking people up short, and saying things against gentlefolks behind their backs."
 - "Now what do you know about gentle-

folks, missus? There you've been a-going on tremenjious, as if you was hand-and-glove with every one of 'em all round the country here and up and down the river."

"Just look you here, Codling—it's very well for you to talk about hand-and-glove and that sort o' stuff, but I knows what I knows, and I sees what I sees, and I hears what I hears; and there be you a-smoking your blessed pipe all day, and a-drawing o' your beer for customers, and never larning nothing; and then you hears they stupids talk in the bar, and you s'poses as you knows everything about everybody; and you reads they bothering newspapers which is wrote by them as is ignorant as yourself; and that's the way with you men. I do believe if it warn't for the smoke out of they pipes you wouldn't have one hidee to rub again another, I don't; and precious bad unsthey is when you gets 'em. You're ready enough

to speak up for a pretty face—it don't take much sense to do that—but when it comes to a gentleman—why, my Heavins! I don't believe you knows the differ 'twixt a gentleman and a pint o' Meux, much less one like him up at The Wick."

"Did you ever hear, Mr. Humpy?" said Codling, with his left hand scratching his head. "That's how my missus do go on some days."

Humpy, feeling the edge of the storm touch him, rose from his seat, saying he must be going home, as he had promised "mother he was only going a bit up the tow," and she'd be inquiring for him. The fat baker staggered through the doorway into the passage, and out on to the tow, carrying with him Jane and Marianne, as Mrs. Codling said, "under his waistband."

"I say, missus," said Codling, when the baker was gone, "you combed my head pretty well this afternoon. I hopes you're satisfied."

"No, I ain't, not half. You wanted every word I said, and a pretty deal more. I do expect you says they things sometimes jest to aggrawate me; and if you don't—well, then, 'tis my opinion as you're a-going, Codling, to a very bad place, and I haven't no wish to keep you company there,—so there now."

And the admirer of Frank got up and left the parlour in a huff. Codling sat still, smoking away at his pipe in his solitary glory, and now and then winking one eye, in a grave way, as if he were considering something in that mind which Mrs. Codling held in such utter contempt.

CHAPTER X.

TWO months had passed away since the death of Tom. It was now nearly the end of the scented month of May. Mr. Morrice had been in London from Easter, residing in his house in Mayfair—enjoying the society of his friends, in his club, in the House of Lords, in the Commons, the opera, the theatre. He would say, "When there is a debate on a good subject there is nothing like one of the Houses; when there is not, give me a good play. I like to sit still and listen of an evening. After these, give me a rubber of whist. Business in the morning; amusement in the evening."

Frank passed a good deal of his time at Richmond; some of it on the river; some of it in the saddle on the Ladies' Mile; some of it in the Travellers' Club; a portion of it almost every morning in certain chambers in Lincoln's Inn, and a portion of many evenings in the Commons, or the theatre; balls and parties were eschewed by both father and son. It must be said that Frank passed but little of his time in Berkeley Square.

On the last day of May Mr. Morrice and Frank left Mayfair for The Wick—much to the contentment of the latter, who, when there, was nearer to Richmond, and who could share in almost all the London life that he cared for as well in one place as in the other. The elder Morrice held two months in London smoke to be sufficient for all social purposes, and found the quiet and freshness of The Wick more than ever

grateful to him after the noise and dust of the town.

"I have seen everything worth seeing, and heard everything that any body has to say in the two months," he would say to Frank; "and I go back to the shade, and the water, and the flowers, and the colts, and the quiet of home, with all the zest of a boy."

So he turned his back on the busy and hurrying city, and contented himself with privacy and his newspaper, and such moderate publicity as the office of a county magistrate required of him.

One morning Mr. Morrice told Frank that now the summer was come and the flowers were in bloom, he must bring over Mrs. Print and her niece from Richmond to see The Wick gardens, and pass the afternoon; and be sure that Pipes was of the party. He had heard so much of Pipes that he must see the dog.

It must be said here that Susan was become a very different person from the Susan when first seen by Frank on board the "Columbine," in the canal of the Southwark Wharf. Then she was but a pretty girl of seventeen; but now she had rather suddenly ripened in these eight months into an almost beautiful young woman of eighteen. Then she was a little less advanced than her years; now she was considerably beyond them. These eight months had had a singular effect on her. It was as if some nutritive power had suddenly and subtly interpenetrated all her nature and developed it -as if it had found her nature in a dormant and languid condition, maturing slowly, and had roused it from this almost inactive state by some magic influence, and given it an impetus onward to some other. It was as if

some florist had taken a backward plant from the open garden, and had given it the warmth and the nourishment of the forcing-house, till it burst rapidly into rich leaf and coloured flower. So Susan had left the barge a backward plant, only just beginning to expand under the warmth of the new and powerful sentiment that was pervading her whole being. When she went to live with her aunt at Richmond she had at one step passed into a new atmosphere. She found herself surrounded with a novel state of things—a hitherto unknown daily life the tone of a higher thought around her; for though her aunt was, in many respects, an almost eccentric woman, and a companion not quite an example in the manner of much of her conversation, still she was a woman in her every-day life of the habits of a gentlewoman-of a warm heart and of a true nature-womanly and well principled, and she

was in a degree just in her appreciation of thought in books. Thus she led Susan's attention to the poetic side of subjects, and to the imaginative; but she did this with a poetic turn of thought, though somewhat wild and untrained, and with a true love of the subject; and thus she by degrees developed the poetic and the imaginative in Susan—dormant until now—and these exercised their refining powers over her, as they always do. Milton and Shakspeare were read, as well as "Childe Harold," and the "Excursion"; and these acted on the developing mind with a kindly and cultivating influence.

The book which Mr. Morrice had lent Susan in the garden had directed her attention on another road, and had shown her what real life is among the greater minds and the higher intellects—what every-day life is made to be by those who direct the lines and roads of thought and action, and who do not merely follow and obey where others lead and command, but are themselves the leaders and commanders.

In all these she had found her aunt ready to join in perusing, and admiring, and discussing, often enough with a daring wildness and the strangest of reflections, but still with an unabated interest, and a real desire to estimate them at their true value. Curious conversation it was at times, with ignorance on the one hand, and the most exravagant conception and inference on the other. Nevertheless there was the subject, and it was being discussed; and now and then bright sparks were struck out of the chaos which illumined the darkness—the plain, simple sense of the young girl correcting and modifying the imaginative fallacies of the elder woman. Often Frank arrived, to find the two in the midst of some subject run

wild, and was appealed to for order and elucidation.

Frank, with his general knowledge of the world, his fairly good converse with books, his classical education, his plain, manly sense, and his daily life passed with a man like his father-a man of cultivated mind and exercised intellect—Frank brought often into the little circle that easy arrangement of thought and that simple explanation of subjects which at once command the consent of less trained listeners. It is no wonder, then, that under the united influences, the master sentiment of woman vivifying all her nature, and a brighter light of thought inspiring all her mental world, Susan grew, as if at a bound almost, from the child of seventeen to the woman of eighteen, in person and in mind.

So now Frank received from his father the intimation as to the visit of Mrs. Print

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and Susan to The Wick very complacently. He took it into his head that there was something more meant under it than was apparent. So he went to Richmond and arranged for their coming in a day or two. Mrs. Print was in a high state of excitement, and Susan was thoroughly happy—only the least bit frightened.

The day arrived, and all the way from Richmond to The Wick Mrs. Print abounded in exclamations of satisfaction at the prospect of seeing the place in its interior, of which she had heard so much. The exterior she had seen from the river with Susan, and they had guessed over the various parts and arrangements of house and gardens. Mrs. Print was also eloquent in guesses as to what Mr. Morrice was like; and as the carriage drove along the long wall of the fleet of Kew Gardens she recalled the day of their first walk there—

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they had taken many since then—and the incidents of it—the gentleman who had spoken to them, and who had lent Susan the book. As they had never met him there since, her niece had never been able to restore him the book; and Mrs. Print had set him down for "some eccentric person, who was harmless, and who was allowed by the managers of the garden to walk about there and read." And she recalled various reminiscences of the York days, one of which was a half-crazy man who walked about the streets, and who occasionally came to Print's shop to borrow a book, and whose "head ran upon stars and constellations and planets which were hundreds and thousands and millions of miles away, and which he supposed were inhabited by people who lived like us and were made like us; and which was perfectly ridiculous, because it was evident that there

couldn't be room in those tiny things for horses and carriages and houses, and Kew Gardens, and Richmond Hills, and that sort of thing."

Susan had some trouble to keep her countenance while her aunt was guessing about Mr. Morrice, and going over the Kew Gardens incident, and the crazy gentleman at York. She had one day asked Frank if she might tell her aunt who it was who lent her the book; but he had begged her to keep it a secret, looking forward to a little scene some day when Mrs. Print should find out who he was. So now they came to the gates of The Wick, and, these standing open in readiness, they were driven up to the entrance—the flight of steps, the tall columns, and the Italian portico. It so happened that, when the carriage drew up at the bottom of the steps, Susan sat on the side nearest to the house. Mr. Morrice

went out, with an old-fashioned politeness, to receive his two guests; and as Susan stepped down from the carriage he took her hand to help her, and keeping hold of it put it into his arm, and so led her up the steps and across the portico into the house, leaving Frank to take care of Mrs. Print. Mr. Morrice led Susan through the hall and into the saloon, which we remember as the scene of the conversation between Sir Charles and Lady Underside and Mr. Morrice, when he startled the mother of Marion and Anna with his notions on the fabric of society and its component parts. It was a noble and finely-proportioned room; and while some fine pictures were on its walls, and marbles and bronzes were scattered with careless elegance about it, some oldfashioned sofas and chairs of huge dimen-· sions gave it a look of staid and sedate beauty, almost of grandeur. Mr. Morrice

seated Susan on one of these sofas, and said a few kind words of welcome to her, himself standing; and then turning himself round, as Frank came in with Mrs. Print, he offered her his hand and bade her welcome in his most affable manner. Mrs. Print put her hand into his, at the same time making him one of her most sweeping obeisances; but looking into his face she was struck with surprise—with astonishment—so that her imposing curtsey was arrested midway. She gave a violent start—rather like a quiver of her whole frame; and then, dropping his hand, she seated herself in some confusion.

"I owe you an apology, Mrs. Print," said Mr. Morrice, "for inflicting on you a surprise. Here is the culprit. Frank insisted on my seeing Miss Susan and our talking together without her knowing who I was, and of course this involved your playing your part in this little drama. I give him and myself up to your punishment, whatever you will please to command."

Mrs. Print had quite recovered herself during this little speech. At the first moment it had rushed through her mind what a number of extraordinary things she had said about the gentleman in Kew Gardens—a general recollection of them floated over her memory; but nature had made her of an elastic material in which brightness of spirit and kindness of heart had a good share. So she was ready to accept in her way the apology, as soon as it was made.

"You are a very wicked young man, Mr. Frank," she said, turning to him, "and I am not at all sure you deserve any forgiveness at all from me. Only think, sir, of the wrong and abominable things you have made me say of your father in my ignorance of who that gentleman was in the Gardens! How-

ever, I hope they punished you for your wickedness, for I called you all sorts of bad names, Mr. Morrice. You must thank him for them. I daresay he told you, and you both had a good laugh over my mistakes. It really was too wrong, and I am extremely displeased."

This she said with a mock gravity to suit the words, and her eyes full of laughter. The effect of this was to make them all join in a burst of mirth, which set them all at their ease and was a better solvent of the seriousness of a first formal interview of the parties under unusual circumstances than could have been any mere courteousness of words and manner. To complete the general satisfaction, Pipes was presented in due form to Mr. Morrice, and met with a full allowance of praise.

Now Mr. Morrice devoted himself to Mrs. Print. He soon engaged her attention by į,

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an invitation to inspect a fine picture hanging on the wall of the saloon, and by asking her opinion of it. This was the most seductive flattery, as it is indeed to all people. Show the most stern man something good in art or nature, and ask his opinion on it. is roused into an effort, seduced into warmth. It is an offering of deference to him. So Mrs. Print was captured in an instant; and Mr. Morrice led her off an unresisting prey to any further bait he might offer to her accept-For the first picture or two to which he directed her attention, she summoned Susan to her side to enjoy it with her; but in a little time she was so full of the subjects before her, and so taken up with her host's kind manner of extracting her opinion, and his intelligent observations, that she forgot all about Susan, and scarcely knew that she had left the saloon and had passed into another room also hung with pictures.

"Where is Susan?" she had said when first she missed her; but Mr. Morrice observed, "I daresay they are in the next room, following us. Never mind Miss Susan, my dear Mrs. Print, she won't run away from us."

So Mr. Morrice led his guest from room to room, and from the staircase to the gallery upstairs; now calling her attention to some old china, Cromwell, or Chelsea, or early Sèvres; and now to pieces of stamped leather in panels from Bruges or Ghent, relics of the days of Spanish rule; and now to carved wood from Brussels, and cabinets of inlaid ebony and ivory from Amsterdam, and then again to one or two fine pieces of sculpture of Thorwaldsen or Gibson,—till Mrs. Print was in a seventh heaven of delight and gratified pride. Though she had not enough of cultivated taste to appreciate to the full the works of art before her, and had not

enough acquaintance with many of the subjects to be able to enter into them, still the little woman possessed that happy and subtle gift of nature, a love of all things beautiful, and with it a certain discernment of the good and the bad efforts which art makes to render nature. So, although in many cases her knowledge was at fault, and her taste deceived, still she loved the good and the beautiful in art when she saw it, and this aided her in appreciating—this intuitive liking saved her from many gross mistakes of pretentiousness which mere learning without love often leads people into. The excellence, too, of the works around her, and the imposing style of house she was in, for the first time in her life, and the courtly manners of her host, combined to impose a certain staidness of demeanour on the little woman; so that, though she indulged every now and then in exclamations of pleasure or surprise at the sight of new claims on her admiration, she did not rush off, in her usual way in unguarded times, into rambling reminiscences to York, and Print, and the general outer world. So she was in consequence more connectedly intelligent than usual, and many of her remarks so pleased her host that he declared afterwards to Frank, "Mrs. Print could be an agreeable companion."

In the meanwhile, Frank had drawn Susan away, after following her aunt to the inspection of one or two pictures in the saloon, to a glass door opening on a flight of steps to the lawn. Pipes, of course, remained with his mistress. Frank led his companion across the lawn, and then by a turf path over the spreading sward to a shrub walk in the direction of the beechtree grove. The whole place lay bathed in a June sun. The long grass, between which

the turf path led, was high and thick, fragrant with the odours of wild flowers in it, and cooling the sunny air with its fresh and dewy breath, nearly ready for the mowers. Susan had so often passed up and down on the river by The Wick that it was in a manner familiar to her; and yet, now that she was within it, the whole seemed strange and new to her, and the beauty of all that was around her—the richness of the luxuriant grass, the deep masses of the foliage of the large trees, and the sweet scent of flowers, and the murmuring hum of bees among them-affected her as though in this atmosphere of The Wick there was some charm her being had never known before.

When they had entered the beech grove, and had gone some little distance, Frank stopped, and taking Pipes in his arms he carried him to the low five-foot wall, and

placed him on it. The drop on the outer side was nearly twelve feet.

"There, Mr. Pipes," said Frank, "this is the spot where I first heard your small voice. You were out there, and I was standing here; and I remember your absurd little cry now, just as if it were yesterday, saying as plain as you could, 'I will be drowned—I will be drowned, and no-body shall save me!"

"It was very kind of you to do it," said Susan; while she smiled at the ridiculous effect of the change of the words. "But how could you think of doing such a thing?"

"I am very glad I did think of doing such a thing, Mr. Pipes—not entirely on your small account, but on account of some results. The fact is," Frank went on, turning to Susan, "it was not much to do; but I like to show you the spot, because it was here

I consider I first knew vou." Susan only looked steadily over the wall to the river. "It was such a chance," he went on, "my knowing you—or perhaps—well, perhaps it was fated. Now only look at the concatenation of fate—or something. Here was I born in this place—that's quite far enough to go back for a beginning, without travelling up through two or three hundred grandfathers to Abraham, isn't it, Pipes?"—a happy smile stole over Susan's face-"well, here I was born, and here I grew up, a good deal of my time in that water or on it, at all hours, so that it did not much matter to me if it was dark or light, or summer or winteronly bar ice—I don't like an ice bath. One day I come home from London—a foggy, misty afternoon—and I say a word to the dogs, and then by the merest chance I walk across the grass where we came just now, to have a talk with the fillies, Liz and Empress, and so on, before dinner; and then, instead of going back, as I might have done when they had had their apples, I walk on here, without any very particular object; and here I all of a sudden hear this small creature complaining that he is not allowed to drown himself in an October evening, and then—and then I meet you. I shouldn't mind risking something on your utterly disbelieving that this was chance—no woman would believe it—and giving your entire faith to its being fated from the time of I don't know when—my birth—or Noah's birth, perhaps. Now, am I right?—fate or chance?—which is it?"

- "How do I know?" said Susan, laughing.
 "I know nothing about either. Did you jump down over this wall?" she said, to turn the conversation a little.
- "Of course I did; and I think the worst part of the whole business was getting

through those osiers in a hurry—the ground is so cut up with watery ditches, troublesome in that light. I suppose you were somewhere there off the arbeles?"

"We were up there"—she pointed up the stream in the most natural way—"not much below Barker's rails, because I remember father said that afternoon that he should stop by Barker's for the night."

Mrs. Print had tried to persuade Susan that "my father" was more proper; but she stuck to "father."

"Why, what a swim Pipes had! How lucky he was a good swimmer, or you would never have come down in the boat; but then he was fated to be a good swimmer, and it was fated that you should come out in the boat to look for him. Now, Pipes, I want to show your mistress the orange walk and the Dutch garden; and I daresay my pet thrush will be there to sing to her."

So saying, Frank took the dog off the wall, and they walked across the park and entered the home grounds again by a gate near the gardens.

So Frank and Susan entered the orangewalk. How shaded and secluded it was! There were the laden fruit-trees covering the lofty wall on the one side, and there were the massed and rare rose-bushes all along in front of them, filling the air with their scent. And there was the tall green wall of hornbeam on the other side, and the firs, and the cedars, and wild cherrytrees, and red cypresses leaning over it and shading the broad walk of smoothest gravel. There were no orange-trees now forming a royal avenue, as in the olden time, but there was the perfume of the roses, and the shade of trees, and the hum of bees, and the song of innumerable birds, undisturbed ever in their home among the shrubs and bushes. These poured out their varying lays.

About half way along the walk a spreading Portugal laurel divided the hornbeam Under this was a seat. To anyone hedge. sitting here in the hottest day there was the repose of the deep shade of the great cedars with their massive trunks and rugged bark and the long, spreading, fan-like branches stretching out their protecting shelter over the laurel and the hornbeam, and over some smooth shaven lawns. Beyond this the deep rich growth of flowery grasses lay bathed in sunlight. Inviting his companion to sit down, Frank said to her, "Do you like this, Susan?"

The song of the birds and the sweet scent of the flowers, the sense of the delicious quiet of the place, the soft summer air and the grateful shade, touched the young girl's sensitive nature, and she only answered, "It is so lovely!" almost in a whisper.

"You can believe now how much I love this place." There was no tone of banter in Frank's voice now.

"Oh! yes, that I can," she said.

"I go away from it, but I always return to it with a new pleasure and content," said Frank. "To my mind it is perfect, and yet —and yet yesterday I wanted something which was not in it."

Susan did not see the allusion, and replied only to the former part of the speech. "It must be so delightful to grow up in a place like this—people should grow up so happy with such beautiful things all round them."

"Do you think so?" said Frank.

"Of course I do not know, but I think if I had lived here from a child I should have loved every tree, and every flower, and every stone in that walk!"

"Yes, I do believe you would," said Frank, earnestly.

"But would not everybody?" she said, seriously. "It seems to me that if a child grew up with all these things before his eyes he must be better for them, and would love them more than things that are ugly."

"It is a beautiful thought of yours, Susan; and it ought to be true in nature, and so it is in a degree, for certainly beauty adds to happiness, as beauty is higher than ugliness."

"I cannot reason about it," said Susan, "I can only feel it."

"Do you feel that life should be different here, in this place, from what it is out of it?"

"Yes," she said, quite innocently. And then her memory ran over the past life in the barge, and she rapidly compared the two. "That was happy too with father I shall always love him as much as ever; but it was different. I could not see it then, and so I was happy, but I can see it now."

- "You could not enjoy it now as you did then?" said Frank, persisting.
- "How could I?—it would be like going down—I don't quite mean that, because father is not down in anything; but it would be different."

"But there are those who think it wrong to have this, and who wish us not to have it, and think the other is best, and that we should all be in it, and keep to it."

Susan looked at him to see if he was talking seriously or was in one of his bantering moods; but seeing he was quite in earnest, she said, "How can that be? I cannot reason about it, but I can feel that that would be thinking that commoner things are better than better things."

- "Splendidly reasoned!" said Frank. "I shall tell that to my father."
- "Ah! now I see you are laughing," said Susan, laughing too.
- "Not a bit of it—I am quite serious—upon my honour. Luckily we do feel these things to be true, without reason as well as with the best." Then, partly changing the subject, he said, "I am so glad you like this dear old place. I have been so often wishing to bring you here ever since—ever since I don't know when—that first day I saw you, I think, at the wharf. Do you remember it?"
- "Yes, that I do," she replied, with innocent readiness.
- "I knew you, but you didn't know me, did you? Now, confess," said Frank.
- "No, not at the first moment," said Susan, a little confused; "because I had

never seen you; but directly you spoke, I was sure it was you."

"Why?" said Frank, looking into her eyes.

"Oh! why?—why, because I remembered your voice," she answered, blushing, "that evening on the water."

"It seems to me that I owe all this to you, Master Pipes," said Frank, fondling the dog; "you must have been born under my lucky star. I remember you quite well," he went on to Susan—"you wore a blue dress, and the pup came and jumped on you, and you stooped down and patted him. I had a kind of idea then that you knew me. Do you think your father did?"

"No, he didn't. How should he?" said Susan.

"That's true. Did you tell him who I was after I was gone?"

"No," said Susan, "I didn't."

"Oh! so you had a little small secret from him from that time, had you?" said Frank.

She blushed, and turned away her head.

"Hark!" said Frank, "there is my pet thrush in the Dutch garden—come and hear him, he's on the red cypress, his favourite place, close by the gate."

So he led her towards the garden gate. The bird continued his song for a time, as they stood listening, almost beneath him perched on the topmost branch. Now he poured out two or three rich mellow notes in succession, and repeated these often, as if pleased with them, and then became quite silent. Presently one long high note of melody filled the whole garden and the surrounding groves with its tender and refined music.

"How lovely!" said Susan, in a whisper, as she stood by Frank's side and looked up

in his face, her own sweet face enraptured. Something startled the bird, and it flew away to another tree; and Frank led Susan through the tall Haarlem gate into the Dutch garden. It was so quaint in form, and so novel to her, that she seemed inclined to linger among the parterres; but Frank, murmuring something about the orangery, rather hurried her through it. When in the building he began explaining its former uses in a nervous kind of manner, and then suddenly saying to her, "Wait here a moment," he went quickly out into the garden again. Susan was surprised at his odd manner; but Frank returned in a minute with two or three sprigs of white jessamine in his hand. Giving Susan these, he asked her to smell them; and whilst her hand was holding them to her face, Frank, bending towards her said, "I said just now

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that yesterday I wanted something beyond what is here—to-day I do not want anything that is not here." In her eyes he saw that inquiring look that shows when a thing is not quite understood, so he said, "You were not here yesterday, and you are here to-day." Then he suddenly threw both his arms round her, and said, "Susan, I love you with all my heart—I want you to be my wife."

She made no movement to escape—content to be held by him. She only looked into his face without a word, and then he leaned his down to hers and kissed her on the forehead.

And then a curious thing occurred, which Darwin may account for. A bird, which had been in the orangery, darted through a window into the garden, and was heard telling the whole chorus of birds that Frank had kissed Susan three or four times, and not on her

forehead; and then Pipes ran barking out at the door, telling the same story, and that Susan was not at all discontented or angry about it.

When Frank and Susan entered the house they found Mr. Morrice and Mrs. Print in the dining-room, expecting them to The whole party were very luncheon. merry. Mrs. Print was in high spirits. a proof of this, during the luncheon Mr. Morrice had especially recommended her not to eat her peas with any meat, but only with a little butter and some peppered gravy which came in hot for that purpose. While she was following his recommendation, and had a spoonful of the peas half-way to her mouth, Frank asked her some question about white lilies. Mrs. Print, remembering the scene in Kew Gardens, imagined that he referred to that, and quite forgetting at the moment what she was doing, shook her hand and spoon at him. All the contents went over the table.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, "there now!" Then, turning to Mr. Morrice, "I declare he's always doing some of his wickedness—isn't he?"

Mr. Morrice joined in abusing Frank, saying it was all his fault, and insisting on Mrs. Print having a fresh allowance of peas and peppered gravy. So they were all very merry.

In the afternoon when they were going away Mr. Morrice took Susan by the hand and led her into another room, on pretence of showing her something. And then he put his arm round her and kissed her, and said, "Thank you, my dear, for saying that you will be my daughter. I am sure you will be always sunshine in my house!" And

all that Susan could do in her agitation was to stammer out some words not very intelligible, with her eyes full of tears.

CHAPTER XI.

It was the middle of July. London was still very full. Parliament was sitting. The clubs were busy. Only those people who always leave Town on the 30th of June by a law to themselves, as that of the ancient Hebrews which lives for ever, and those who make it a condition of their existence to go abroad every summer, were gone. The Mile was still thronged, and the Corner was crowded daily. It was three o'clock in the day, and the morning-room of The Travellers' Club was occupied by a number of men.

- "So it's all over, and Frank Morrice tied up," said Paulton, coming up to a little knot of men in a corner.
- "Were you there?" said Mortimer, one of the party.
- "Of course I was. Frank asked me to stand by him, and so I did. I'm just come away from the breakfast; a capital one; given by his father in the family house at Mayfair."
- "Do you suppose he likes it?" said Mortimer.
- "I don't know anything about liking it," said Paulton, "but you never saw a man look more pleased in your life than he was this morning—gay as a rabbit—made a speech at the breakfast—good one, too."
- "How about the church?" asked a man; "were there many there?—of the party, I mean?"
 - "You never saw anything better; the

party was a capital one; a bishop to marry them, and——"

"A bishop! That was strong," said Captain Wynckly.

"Ely is a relation of Morrice," said Paulton, "and so he was asked to marry them; of course he said Yes, and there were six bridesmaids."

"Six! Why, how the deuce did they manage it?" said Mortimer.

"I'll tell you:—there were Underside's two girls; relations of Morrice, you know. I have a suspicion my lady made a wry face, but the two girls behaved like Britons; and there were two Scotch girls, up in London for the first time, with an elderly aunt, also cousins or something—Scotch cousins, you know; ready to go to anything and enjoying the affair immensely; would have been bridesmaids to a young and marriageable camelopard at the Zoo if wanted; and

then there were two girls, daughters of some worthies at Richmond."

"I know them," said Wynckly, "they are two as good girls as can be. Their mother fell in with Morrice's girl—beg pardon, his wife now—in church somewhere at Richmond, and that Mrs. Print she has been living there with. They scraped acquaintance, as people do. Seeing Frank Morrice continually there, they considered everything was as it should be, and so they became quite thick with Mrs. Print and her niece."

"Yes, those were the other two," said Paulton, "that made up the six, and as well dressed and as neatly appointed as any lot you ever saw."

"And the bride—you forgot her," said Mortimer.

"Ah, you're not going to forget her in a hurry, I can answer for it," said Paulton; "that is if you have eyes in your head and you know a beautiful girl when you see her. Everybody was fairly taken aback when she came into the church; no one had seen her except one or two, and nobody expected anything so good as that. By Jupiter, you may look through our blessed company of angels at the Corner, and our thoroughbred ones of the old blood, and you won't find many to beat Mrs. Frank Morrice in the way she carries her head and her style of going."

"How you do talk, Paulton!" said Wynckly.

"Well, what I mean is, that she is really a lady-like person—though where she can have caught the manner of the thing, I can't imagine."

"She has not caught anything from anybody," said Wynckly, "so old Lady Ashford tells me. She was down at The Wick one day lately and met her and the aunt there, and she says she is simply a quiet, unaffected, naturally graceful person, with no pretention to grand manners, no flourishing about and doing the graceful, as some of our women absurdly consider the right thing; and I'll tell you who is a good judge of manner—that old Lady Ashford, no better. I daresay she was at the breakfast, eh, Paulton?"

"True enough, she was. Her ladyship was a great card there, I assure you," said Paulton, "very attentive and kind to Mrs. Frank."

"She told me," said Wynckly, "that Frank Morrice has chosen well for himself, and, never mind what people say, she is as nice a girl as any in London."

"What is the aunt like, Paulton?" said

"She is as good as a play," replied Paul-

very nearly got up and made a speech, only père Morrice held her down; and at the church she wanted to kiss the Bishop—insisted on it. I don't think she knew in the least what she was about. The poor man wanted to escape; didn't care to be kissed by that little grey woman. Mrs. Frank Morrice was another pair of shoes. Bishops are but men."

"I heard just now," said Wynne, joining the party, "that kisses were going about freely; Mrs. Frank Morrice was so pretty, and this set a bad example. I'm told that the vestry was exactly like a flower-garden on a June morning and kisses were flying about just like those yellow and white butterflies all over the place—look whichever way you would, there they were; the old men took it into their heads it was the correct thing to kiss the bridesmaids besides the bride,

and the whole thing was like an Agapemone."

"I wish I had been there," said Mortimer gravely. The other men laughed, but Captain Wynckly looked grave at this account of the vestry.

"Were there many people in the church," said Lord Wyville: "lookers-on in the galleries?"

"Many, so I'm told," said Wynne;
"the galleries were crowded; half the
West End went to see it. I can't tell how,
but my bootmaker tells me that it got about
that a Lord was going to marry the daughter of a river shark, and this excited the
curiosity of the million. I do believe they
expected to see her come in dressed in some
Wapping slops with a frill cap; and the Lord
to enter the church with his coronet on his
head and habited in silver and gold. Anyhow, the galleries were full."

"If the million had heard of the story of the fight of Frank Morrice with the young bargeman," said Lord Wyville, "that would have thrown an additional interest over the marriage."

"There are some variorum editions of that story afloat," said Paulton. "I don't think we have the right one—not the Aldine. I understand the newspaper account of the matter was all wrong. I hinted it to Morrice one day, but he is a close fellow—turned a deaf ear to my hint, as if he was a stranger to the whole affair. But the story goes that two men attacked Morrice in broad day in the middle of the river. They say he was quietly sculling down towards Chiswick somewhere, and two men in a boat half drunk fouled him, and got up a quarrel, and Morrice was forced in self-defence to fight. Being one to two, he used one of his sculls, and he hit one of the men a

stunner and knocked him overboard, and the other made off. Morrice picked him out of the water and carried him to some public, where he died in twenty-four hours; and then it turned out that he was the man there was the row about last winter, suspected of the murder of that poor devil by The Wick, and levanted—come back in disguise, and turned up on the river."

"I didn't like to interrupt you, Paulton," said Wynne, "but that isn't quite the story. I was at Richmond the other day, saw the old waiter—you know, at the 'Garter'— and had it all. Quite true what Paulton says about man in disguise being same man as was suspected of killing poor devil down there last winter; but old waiter says story about there is that this man dogged Morrice about Richmond—people saw him there— great beard and all that, like a foreigner, earrings in his ears, and——"

"Egad! now I remember," said Mortimer, interrupting; "there was a man like that hanging about the club here one day, about that time, when Morrice was starting for home. I remember it quite well—a big black fellow."

"Same man," said Wynne—"dogs Morrice—seen hanging about The Wick for a week or so—marks Frank out one evening in the dusk going down-stream in his boat, sallies out on him—sort of Riff pirate, you know—and charges him broadside—regular fight—Morrice knocks Riff pirate out of time with a blow of his scull and hits him into the water—a man living near comes up in his boat, seeing the entertainment, and helps pick up the rover, when they find his head badly broken—carry him to shore to some house, and he dies in the night."

"Absurd story!" whispered Mortimer to a man next him. "What was the meaning of it all?" said, slowly, an elderly diplomatist, who had sat listening, and had not spoken a word hitherto; he had been out of England, and was ignorant of all this story of Frank Morrice. "I do not see the cause of the quarrel."

No one replied for a minute; and then Wynckly, who sat next to him, leaned towards the elderly inquirer, and whispered something in his ear.

The diplomatist raised his eyebrows, said "Oh!" and then leaned back in his corner again.

"I always said," observed Wynne, "that The Wick is the most extraordinarily sporting place I know of round London. Suppose people get accustomed to this kind of thing, and Frank has got to like it—considers it quite part of his daily life. Quite a chance if he goes out for a stroll down

the park to the osiers, or for a scull on the river, if he does not fall in with some adventure—a dead man, or a gentleman lying in wait, of Moorish habits, or of Norse family, with the ancient instincts strong in his blood, ready to sally out and offer fight, or avenge damage to his person done on former roving expeditions. It must be a delightful neighbourhood to live in—so suited to his young bride!"

"My dear boy," said Lord Wyville, laughing, "your imagination rides a capital nag—nothing so good in my stable. But is it true that Mr. Morrice and the young couple are all gone off to Paris?"

"No, no—not quite that," said Paulton.

"Mr. Morrice gives them up The Wick for a fortnight or three weeks, and then he gives them a trip to Paris, he being paymaster. In the meantime, he stays here in London, and enjoys life among his friends."

The party broke up from the sofa in the corner, and Lord Wyville, hooking his arm into that of Captain Wynckly, as they went down the club steps, said, "You are a young man, Wynckly, and if I might suggest, there is a very charming young person in Berkeley Square—quite worth any man looking after—Anna Underside; she is a delightful girl, and will have a something to make the pot boil. You should think of her."

As Captain Wynckly walked along Pall Mall, after parting with Lord Wyville, he met a friend, and stopped to have a few words of gossip.

- "Have you heard this about Wyville?" said the friend.
- "Heard nothing particular," replied Wynckly.
- "Oh! so very ably managed—Wyville is a diplomat. You remember his daughter a rather fine girl, but with her eyes open

about her dad—never intended him to marry again, you understand. Well, all this season he has been dining that good-looking fellow, Sir Alton Towers, and the upshot is that within these few days it's all arranged, and Sir Alton carries off Miss Wyville as fast as lawyers can fill the parchments. Wyville, I'm told, comes down handsome—money in Consols."

- "Well, that's all right for Miss Wyville," said Wynckly.
- "Yes, but look at the policy. My Lady Towers well down in the Tyrol, or somewhere, in the autumn, Wyville expected to join them, my lord quietly arranges matters in Berkeley Square,—so I am given to understand. When the cat's away, the mice play. Mousey couldn't nibble his bit of cheese in quiet while Pussy was by. Fancy Pussy's face some fine morning when she reads in Galignani the marriage of The

Right Hon. Lord Wyville to Marion, eldest daughter of Sir Charles Underside. Towers won't enjoy himself that day."

"Neatly schemed," thought Captain Wynckly to himself as he quitted his friend. "That accounts for his amiable recommendation to me just now in the club to look after Anna. He intends Marion for himself. Very good of him to wish me for his brother-in-law. I like him; and I daresay we shall have some pretty sporting together at Woodbury, if things come out right." So considering, Captain Wynckly went on to Berkeley Square.

CHAPTER XII.

A YEAR has passed by since the events of the last chapter, and the social world moves on in its course. The Travellers' Club discusses in its easy way, at its will and pleasure, both small things and great things—the marriages of its members and the laws of whist, as well as the advantages of Monarchies and Republics. Lord and Lady Wyville, and Captain and Mrs. Wynckly, live their married lives very pleasantly; and were last winter a good deal at Woodbury. Lady Ashford was of the Christmas circle there, and was as gay as ever. She told them all that she had paid a visit to The Wick, and had found Mrs.

Frank Morrice a very sensible and amiable young woman—"a charming person, my dear Lady Underside."

Mrs. Print is still living at the cottage at Richmond, as she says she finds "things have given up happening every day as they used to do, and she can go to bed now with her head on her shoulders." She has made some acquaintances there, and, in spite of all her odd ways, is much respected for her many charities, and much liked for her genuine kindness of heart. She often goes to The Wick, and stays there sometimes for a day or two; and is fond of sitting in the warm summer days under the shading cedars by the Orange Walk, and reading poetry; and sometimes lying on the grass there with her garden hat over her eyes, and imagining herself, as she used to do in Homedale Park, "somewhere or other."

Harding still holds to his life on the

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He, however, out of a sense of the becoming to his daughter and Frank, has given up his barge on the waters of the Thames above London, and has a barge or two of his own and is a prosperous man in his line of commerce below the City. and then he comes up and passes a few days at Richmond with his sister, and Joe and Jenny are as happy and as gay as a boy and girl. Susan goes over there on these occasions, besides others; and on the last there was a stout nurse in the carriage, and a grand boy in her arms, and there was an immense exclaiming over him by Mrs. Print, while Harding looked at him, and touched him, as one sees a large Newfoundland dog regard and treat a small pup of his family—with much curiosity and some alarm, as a very singular animal. Harding never goes to The Wick, because, he says, he is out of his element there—"not at

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home, ye see, Jenny, and only in people's way."

Sangster, the old barge-builder, is still in his cottage near Barker's rails, and Mr. and Mrs. Codling are still at Mortlake, and so is Humpy, the fat baker; and now and then they meet in the parlour of Mrs. Codling. and have a talk about that extraordinary fight by the osiers, and the death of the young man. And Mrs. Codling has come to think Mrs. Frank Morrice a very pretty and a very amiable lady, but shakes her head a little, and says—"Well, I s'pose it's all as should be; anyhow, I were right, and Codling were wrong," as she sees Frank and Susan come down in the skiff. They pay her a visit occasionally, and then go to the churchyard and take a minute's look at the tombstone of "poor Tom."

Frank and Susan are living at The Wick, thoroughly happy and content with

each other. A small creature has arrived, as has been said, to add to the family party. Susan finds that the Orange Walk is a delightful place for a shady stroll in the hot summer afternoons; and Frank and his wife sit often under the cedars, and talk of the past days—for Susan is the same natural person she was, and makes no pretence and no concealment about her former life. Thus no embarrassment ever comes into their conversation or their habits as regards the river and the craft upon it. She is simply grateful to Frank for lifting her out of that life into a better, and shows her sense of the act by thoroughly and unaffectedly enjoying what he has given her, and by entering into all his ways and schemes for the future with honest warmth.

There is an old carrion crow sits often up on a solitary oak in the park and sends out his harsh and grating note. Mr. Morrice calls him the Republican. Often as Susan sits there under the cedars she hears Frank's favourite thrush pour out its melodious song upon the summer air, and the moment comes back to her when she stood by Frank's side near the gates of the Dutch garden, and they listened to it together—a happy prelude to the scene so soon after in the orangery, when Frank for the first time told her openly that he loved her, and took her in his arms and kissed her, and asked her to be his wife. The song of that thrush seems to give a magic touch to all her sense of happiness, and to express to her all that surrounds her of beauty, and all that charms her in the high and refined life around her. And then sometimes in the middle of this sounds forth that harsh and guttural call from the solitary oak. The black Republican croaks out with discordant and grating voice his repulsive utterance, and all nature —all beautiful nature—seems out of joint and out of harmony, till the coarse and offensive note has ceased.

Frank and his father are as content with each other as ever. Though father and son they are friends besides. Often may they be seen in the large room of the Italian pavilion which looks down over the river and up its long reach to Kew. When the tide is high, and the water is glittering under the blaze of an afternoon July sun, Susan is of the party, her bonnet thrown off, and her bright hair shining in the shaded light. So they sit by the open windows.

THE END.

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